

Faculty of Theology  
University of Helsinki

**NEVER A CHURCH OF SILENCE:  
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN REVOLUTIONARY CUBA,  
1959–1986**

Petra Kuivala

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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In Helsinki on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2019



## ABSTRACT

The doctoral dissertation *Never a Church of Silence: The Catholic Church in Revolutionary Cuba, 1959–1986* explores the histories of Catholicism in the Cuban revolution. The research traces both the intra-ecclesial discourse of the Catholic Church in the revolution and the lived experiences of Cuban Catholics in the revolutionary reality.

The research addresses a topic scarcely acknowledged in international scholarship: religion in revolutionary Cuba. Among the lacunas in scholarly knowledge are the histories of Cuban Catholics in the revolutionary reality. While preceding scholarship has focused on the institutional histories of Cuban Catholicism, it has placed little attention on the lived experiences and quotidian life of Catholics in the revolution. Correspondingly, many of the social histories of the revolution have also remained silenced by the revolution's dominant narratives, and hidden from scholars by the silence of the Cuban archives.

Drawing on previously inaccessible Cuban primary sources, both documental and oral, the research provides new insights into the dynamics of Catholicism in the revolution and Catholic discourse on the revolution. The research presented here is based on an extensive amount of unstudied documents housed in the archives of the Catholic Church in Cuba. As these sources appear in international scholarship for the first time, they mark a significant step forward in historical knowledge about Catholicism and the Cuban revolution and represent a unique opening into post-1959 Cuban archives. The archival sources are complemented with oral history sources: interviews with Cubans narrating their individual and collective experiences in living the revolution as Catholics.

The multitude of new sources both enables the discovery of new histories of Catholicism in the revolution and makes it possible to bridge the more institutional histories of the Catholic Church and the individual, personal histories of Cuban Catholics. While preceding scholarship has predominantly approached religion within the narrative framework of revolutionary historiography, this research analyzes the histories of Catholicism and the revolution pronounced by Cuban Catholic voices. In intra-ecclesial discourse, the sources enable an analysis of a large array of voices: those of the ecclesial hierarchy, clergy, and laypeople discussing and recounting distinctively Catholic histories of the revolution.

The overarching conclusions of the research discuss the continuous, multidimensional agency of the Catholic Church in revolutionary Cuba, and consequently, the intrinsically intertwining interplay of religion and the revolution in the experiences of Cuban Catholics. While constructions highlighting the silence and absence of Catholicism in the revolution have previously framed scholarly paradigms, this study presents a more complex and nuanced analysis of Catholic life in the revolution. As a whole, this research provides a new opening for analyzing the Cuban revolution from the perspectives of lived experience, various social actors of the revolutionary society, and histories recounted by voices from within the revolutionary reality.

Further illustrating the manifold role of religion in the Cuban revolution is the multidisciplinary nature of this research project. In addition to the study of church history and theology, this work is situated in the field of Cuban studies. It also intersects with Latin American and Caribbean studies, studies of oral history, and the study of lived religion, contributing to each field with new perspectives and conclusions.





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## I INTRODUCTION

### 1. The Aim of the Research

In the first years of the Cuban revolution, a statue of the Virgin Mary disappeared from the town of Santa Clara. She was known as the Travelers' Virgin, *La Virgen del Camino*, in the years that she stood beside the road to Santa Clara, greeting those starting and finishing their journeys. Those were the years of her public presence, from 1957 to the early 1960s. Her story then took a dramatic turn during the revolution of Fidel Castro: one day in the first years of the revolutionary rule, the Virgin disappeared from her site by the road.<sup>1</sup>

Without any explanations or reasons provided, she just disappeared. Rumors circulated that local representatives of the revolutionary regime had taken the statue down and away because her presence “had begun to bother them,”<sup>2</sup> yet verified information was scarce. In the following years, no news about the Virgin's whereabouts surfaced. People engaged in speculations but rarely aloud in public. Gradually, with every passing year the Virgin became a well-known story in Santa Clara, albeit one publicly reminisced about only rarely. She fell into a sphere of silence that dominated both revolutionary and religious landscapes on the island for decades. For the Catholic community in Santa Clara, the lost Virgin became a symbol of history in many ways. Her story of becoming lost and unacknowledged, of becoming silenced, began to symbolize the experiences of Santa Clara's Catholics in the revolution. Similar to the history of the Virgin, those stories have remained largely unknown.

The disappearance of the Travelers' Virgin is where this research begins. With an inescapable resemblance to the story of the Virgin, this work traces histories that disappeared; histories that fell into spheres of silence and became excluded from public discourse on the revolutionary past on the island. The historiography of the revolution has directed its lens elsewhere: histories of the Catholicism within and in the margins of the revolution have not belonged to the revolution's established narratives and historiography. For decades, the histories of Cuban Catholics from 1959 onwards have remained silent, hidden histories.

In several ways, this research project operates at the intersection of silences. As the introductory chapter establishes, the silence of the archives and oral histories and silences in the revolutionary historiography and scholarly work come together in the focus of this study: histories of Catholicism in revolutionary Cuba, analyzed through Catholic voices in Cuban primary sources. As the forthcoming chapters illustrate, these histories are about recovering stories that have remained silent or that have been silenced within the revolution and its established history as well as in scholarly work.

This study begins by asking how the Catholic Church in Cuba and Cuban Catholics experienced the revolution. When Fidel Castro came to power and the revolution was established as Cuba's all-encompassing framework in 1959, it marked the beginning of a new

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1 While oral histories of the episode are plenty in Santa Clara, documents referring to the disappearance of the Virgin are scarcely found, and they are based on the oral histories. The first writings about the statue were published after the inauguration of the statue in 1957 by the Daughters of Isabella, *Damas Isabelinas*, the female auxiliary of the Knights of Columbus, which donated the funds and oversaw the project. Currently, the archives of the Diocese of Santa contain historical documents about the project. The more recent written accounts include García 27.4.2018 and Pérez Sáez 29.4.2018.

2 La Virgen Inmaculada que “desapareció” dos veces en Santa Clara 29.4.2018.

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era for the Cuban Church. In 1986, more than twenty-five years later, the Church was considered to have re-emerged in Cuban society after a long process of internal reflection and discourse. Much of the history that falls in between these markers remains undisclosed. Regarding those years, I ask what constituted the Church's agency in Cuba, and how the internal discourse of the Church on ecclesial participation in the revolution evolved.

By mapping Catholic experiences in the revolution, this research explores previously underrepresented social histories of the Cuban revolution: the experiences of Cuban Catholics in the daily courses of life in the revolutionary reality. Central to these questions are discourses of ideal citizenry, social participation, and meaning-making of both the Cuban revolution and the historical context of the global Catholic Church. From early on, the revolution issued a call for unwavering support and unity. Of the great masses of Cubans who became revolutionaries, how did Cuban Catholics navigate their lives? In the course of the revolutionary process, as Catholicism became a space of otherness in the revolutionary reality and Catholics a marginal social group in Cuban society, what kinds of Catholic experiences emerged from this situation and what kinds of meanings were given to the experiences? Consequently, I also ask what kind of a Church emerged from both the Cuban intra-ecclesial discourse in the revolution and the experiences of Catholics as Cubans living the revolution.

The fundamental contribution of my research is to redirect the lens from the revolution's dominant perspective to examining the histories of Catholicism in the revolution through voices from within the Church: the perspectives of the Church on the revolution and intra-ecclesial discourse within the revolution. Through this approach, the study establishes that while the revolutionary narrative has consolidated its accounts of the Church's role, and scholarly work has only rarely questioned the paradigmatic normativity of these narratives, the Church in Cuba has experienced and recounted a different history, one which has largely fallen into silence in both Cuba and scholarly work on Cuba.

In the process of conducting research in Cuba for this study, I became the first scholar to gain access to the documents dating to the revolution in the archives of the Catholic Church in Cuba. Thus, the vast amount of archival documents appears in international scholarship for the first time in this study. With this new opening, my work breaks a silence that has dominated scholarly knowledge on both Cuban Catholicism and the revolution. At the same time, many of the individual accounts of the past pronounced in this study have been presented for the first time to scholarly examination, breaking the silence of public remembrance of Catholic experiences within the Cuban revolutionary reality.

In attempts to historicize the Cuban revolution, religion and its influence have often been neglected or not fully acknowledged: religion remains an understudied area of the Cuban revolution. In preceding scholarly work, religion has not been acknowledged for its multilayered and complex relation of dynamic exchange with the revolutionary experience and it has often been completely neglected or treated as a subcategory of the revolution. While the approach has been partially influenced by the lack of primary sources, it sheds light also on the premises and contexts of scholarly thought from which arise the interpretations of what is included in the Cuban revolution, what the revolutionary process consists of, and which discourses belong to it.

Regarding Cuban Catholicism, a predominant approach in preceding scholarly work on the revolution has been to examine the Church as an institution in juxtaposition with the State;

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through controversy, confrontation, and binaries of revolutionary and religious encounters. In these perspectives, Catholicism has been placed within the framework of the revolution and its narrative structures. This has led to a paradigm of inscribing the Church as an object of the revolution, merely responding passively to the revolutionary process without agency and authority of its own. Paradoxically, the paradigm of negation has been transferred to scholarly work ever since the beginning of the revolution and the creation of revolutionary narratives. It has emphasized viewing religion through a lens of otherness, from a perspective of exclusion provided by the revolution's grand narrative, placing Catholicism in both contrast to and comparison to the revolution and simultaneously within the frameworks of the revolutionary narrative. In this sense, scholarly work has followed and even reinforced the binaries of the revolution and religion as isolated entities, accepting the presupposition of passive religiosity without agency and autonomy, recounting religious histories through the framework of the revolution with a predominant emphasis on histories emerging from conflict and confrontation.

My research challenges this prevailing paradigm by exploring the intrinsically intertwining dynamics of religion and the revolution in Cuba. Institutionally, religion and Churches—Catholicism in particular—are no strangers to power, citizenry, and civic agency in public and social life. As this study presupposes, religion is not a separated category from any other field or dimension of society: permeating all spheres, religion stands in constant interaction with both public and civic sectors via both assimilation and contrast. When studying the Cuban revolution, the participation and citizenry of Cuban Catholics should not be examined as categories isolated from the public sphere or individual identities, that is, as exceptions or deviations. In the revolution, Catholics were also Cubans, both citizens and individuals in public as well as private spheres of life, and this is the nexus warranting more scholarly attention.

On a more individual level, the histories of Cuban Catholics and experiences of Catholicism are inextricably linked with living the revolution. Religious beliefs, faith, spirituality and religious practices pertain to the spectrum of identities in human life; religion exists and is experienced in connection with other identities of an individual, each dialogically gaining meaning from the other. From race to gender, social and economic status, family histories and personal experiences, religion intersects with human experience. If we, as scholars of Cuba's revolution, take seriously the claim of the revolutionary process being a total revolution for all Cubans, intersecting with all spheres of Cuban life,<sup>3</sup> we must consequently also recognize and take seriously the role of religion in the revolutionary experience.

In my research, the in-depth examination of religious meaning-making of the revolution is enabled via the disciplinary and methodological localization of theology and religious studies in the histories of the revolution. As this study shows, the histories of Catholicism in the revolution have, to a large extent, remained unexplored within the scholarly approaches of theology and religious studies, by placing a focus on the subjectivity of the Church, or by the use of theology as a hermeneutical tool for understanding Catholic discourse in the revolution. The place of the Catholic Church in the Cuban revolution as a subject, as an independent agent actively shaping its presence and history, is still a topic to be addressed in depth in scholarly

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3 In scholarship, the all-encompassing nature of the Cuban revolution and its reverberating effect on all sectors of Cuban society and all Cubans as individuals have been discussed by, among others, de la Fuente 2001; Guerra 2012; Pérez-Stable 2012; Pérez 2015a; Bustamante 2019.

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work. Furthermore, focus on Church–State relations in the revolution has directed the scholarly lens towards a myopic approach: the history of Catholicism has been, for the most part, examined as an isolated history in the revolution, without connecting it to the histories of Catholicism in the Caribbean and Latin America, nor to the currents of global Catholicism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Not only have the revolution and scholarly work on the revolution written Catholicism out of Cuban history, but Cuba as a site of Catholicism has also been excluded from the landscapes of the Catholic Church in historical and theological discourse. This study addresses and challenges both these exclusions by claiming that the experience of the Church in Cuba belongs to histories of both the revolution and global Catholicism. My research is thus an attempt to bridge the narratives for understanding the Cuban revolution and explore the histories of Catholicism on the island. A significant contribution of this research is that it weaves the histories of the Church and Cuban Catholics into the histories of the revolution and the history of the Cuban revolution into histories of contemporary Catholicism. In this manner, my work excavates the intrinsically intertwining, not isolated, histories of religion and the revolution. With this objective, my research also joins emerging scholarly work by offering new perspectives on the Cuban revolution.

The research contributes to scholarship that seeks to both enrich and problematize prevailing paradigms of academic study on the Cuban revolution and Catholicism in Cuba. Thus, this research is multidisciplinary by nature. While I mirror my work with and against the study of contemporary Church history and Cuban studies, my research intersects also with Latin American studies, studies of lived religion, and oral history studies. At the same time, this research also contributes to the field of theology by analyzing the historical processes of Cuban theological thought and discourse. As I discuss further in the conclusions of this dissertation, the multidisciplinary positioning of my research provides several new perspectives on the study of Cuba and Catholicism in a broader context. The unique contribution of my research is to further diversify such perspectives with new approaches, sources, methodology, and conclusions that call for not only reconsidering our prevailing understanding of Cuba's revolution, but also asking new questions in search of novel visions and interpretations of religion in Cuba.

## **2. Challenges in Historical Research on Cuba**

### **2.1. The Silence of the Archives**

Silence reigns in the Cuban archives. Scholars of the Cuban revolution have struggled with the silence of the archives for half a century: only a few have been allowed to conduct work in the post-1959<sup>4</sup> collections.<sup>5</sup> These openings have marked exceptions to the silence, enabling

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4 Regarding the accessibility of information in the archives of the Cuban State, Macle Cruz (2019) discusses Cuban archival policies in the revolutionary period via the Law Number 714, concerning archival affairs, and its impact on the paucity of archival records from the year 1960 onwards. According to Macle Cruz, only in 2001 and 2009 did new legislation direct the reorganization of the Cuban State archives despite them still being considered inaccessible to the public.

5 Pérez 1992, 66; Mesa-Lago 1992; Chomsky 1994; Gleijeses 2002, 9–10; Sweig 2002, 190–191; Gleijeses 2013; Chase 2015, 15; Spence Benson 2016, 22; Lambe 2017; Bustamante & Lambe 2019; Macle Cruz 2019.

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significant breakthroughs in international scholarship.<sup>6</sup> With respect to Catholic archives in Cuba, this study is the first scholarly work to draw on Catholic archival sources produced in the revolutionary period. As such, this study provides an opening both to new scholarly perspectives on Cuban Catholicism and breaks the silence of the post-1959 Catholic archives on the island. It also provides new insights into archival policies in Cuba and renewed discourse on historiographical perspectives derived from both the continuing silence and the opening of the archives.

Through an unyielding silence, the Cuban archives exercise power over history. They provide scholars with material resources to study the past and thus participate in the selection of subjects and the direction of academic discourse.<sup>7</sup> Scholars continue to discuss the nature of the Cuban archives as classified and unavailable for scholarly use and the impact of the archival silence when imposing official narratives and paradigms on histories of the revolution. In Cuba, knowledge about historical evidence has been omitted, not relayed to scholars, or else distorted. The very existence of archival documentation has been negated by officials of both the Cuban State and the Catholic Church in Cuba.<sup>8</sup> The scarcity of information available on the existence and location of sources, with the lack of explanation given for archival policies and protocol, continues to pose severe practical challenges for scholarly work.<sup>9</sup>

The silence of the archives has been particularly damaging for historians, as the refusal to yield the content of the Cuban archives to scholarly use has obscured evidence of the revolution's history and resulted in an overemphasis on and distortion of selected historiographies. The silence has also redirected scholarly interests and attention by forcing historians to seek alternatives. Where archives are not open, scholars lack historical evidence in written form and must look for ways to overcome the silence: other repositories of sources, other types of historical data, even alternate approaches and perspectives.

In contemporary Cuba, accessibility to sources continues to shape the stories studied as histories of the revolution. By means of archival policies, the revolution directs the history constructed as the past of the revolution.<sup>10</sup> In the case of Catholic ecclesial history in revolutionary Cuba, this has often resulted in scholarly attention directed away from the subject, towards topics more approachable or with seemingly more relevance due to the existence and availability of historical evidence. This study places the histories of Catholicism on the map of unstudied areas of the revolution, and it points to topics unaddressed in the shadow of archival silences and the reinforced production of historical narratives.<sup>11</sup>

As is generally the state of the archives in revolutionary Cuba,<sup>12</sup> the post-1959 archives of the Catholic Church on the island have also remained silent. The archival collections of the

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6 Among the most well-known examples are the works by historian Piero Gleijeses, who was the first scholar to gain access to classified Cuban governmental archives, and the work of Julia Sweig, who gained access to the Cuban Council of State's Office of Historic Affairs (OAH). For a discussion on the process, see Gleijeses 2002, and its impact, see Sweig 2002; Macle Cruz 2019.

7 Guerra 2012, 34; Chase 2015, 15; Fowler 2017, 3; Macle Cruz 2019.

8 Gleijeses 2002, 9–10; Gleijeses 2013; Hatzky 2015, 17; Kuivala 2017a; Macle Cruz 2019.

9 Hatzky 2015, 17; Kuivala 2017a; Bustamante & Lambe 2019, 15.

10 Chase 2015, 15–17; Bustamante & Lambe 2019; Macle Cruz 2019.

11 For a discussion on the production of historiographical knowledge through the silence and exposure of Cuban Catholic archives, see Kuivala 2017a.

12 For a more recent discussion on the Cuban archival laws and the accessibility of archival sources, see Macle Cruz 2019.

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Catholic Church in Cuba dating to the revolution are not available for scholarly use. The collections are considered classified and thus remain uncatalogued and unavailable for consultation. There are very little, if any, written records on the contents of the archives, and oral information on what actually has been archived and how it has been done remains classified as well. Behind the façade of silence lie endless stacks of paper, cardboard boxes, and folders. This is the case for archives at all levels of Catholic offices in Cuba: the national, diocesan, and congregational offices, each with its own distinct archives or collections of archival documentation. Whereas scholars may consult archival collections dating back to the pre-revolutionary era, the year 1959 marks a radical shift in archival policies—a transition from open to closed, from voices on record to the silence of the archives.

For the Catholic Church in Cuba, maintaining the silence of the revolution-era archives has remained a conscious policy since the early years of the revolution. It has been reinforced by the revolution and the complex relations of the revolution and the institutional Catholic Church on the island. The tentative balance in Church–State relations, ambivalence and ambiguity regarding the role of the Church in the Cuban civic sphere, and the unexamined episodes in the history of the Church during the revolution have all contributed to the current archival policy regarding the Catholic archives on the island. Additionally, the state of otherness experienced by the Church in the revolution has reinforced the archival policy, which in turn has contributed to histories of otherness through the very lack of historical evidence to counter the claim.

In the archives, the process of historical and historiographical production is intertwined with the sociopolitical context of the time.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the Catholic archives are also a product of the revolutionary setting, the distinct Cuban context defined by the power exercised by the State over institutions and individuals, and the way this was perceived and interpreted by the Church. Yet the archives are also an institution, and an active agent, reflecting the Catholic Church's internal dynamics of power in Cuba, a response to the sociopolitical settings. In this manner, what was recorded in the first place, what has been preserved, and what has (and has not, for the most part) been exposed to scholarly study reflects the Church's own understanding of how to navigate the past and the (non-)production of the past in Cuba.

The archival policies of both the Catholic Church and the Cuban State continue to direct the array of voices explored in scholarship. From the archives, those voices emerge that are printed on the pages of documentation made available to scholars. Omitted documentation and classified folders remain silent and as silenced voices. Through the archives, the Catholic Church in Cuba exercises both power and autonomy to negotiate its historiographical construction in both the Cuban context and scholarly work. By controlling the archives, the Church not only responds to the past of the revolution; it also creates its own relationship to the past and the histories created from the accounts of the past within the Church. Through its archival policy, the institutional church attempts to manage and construct its own history.

In Cuba, the silence of the Catholic archives takes many forms. By recognizing and understanding the contexts of the silence, and the production of these silences as a consequence of the past, it is possible to identify substantial traces of how the past is considered a still-present

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13 Booth 2006; Lambe 2017, 234–236.



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variable in the sense-making of history<sup>14</sup> for the Cuban Church. Particularly with previously unexplored records, it is thus necessary to ask how the archives have come to be, how the collections were assembled, classified, and managed, and how the preceding visions on the nature of the Catholic archives interact with the permission granted to me to access the archives for the first time.<sup>15</sup>

As the silence of the archive has been a self-appointed condition set by the Catholic Church, it relates to what Simon Fowler calls “the silence of the secret.”<sup>16</sup> Although large quantities of previously unstudied archival documentation were made available to me for this study, I acknowledge that certain collections directly addressing the politically sensitive topics of the early 1960s remain inaccessible, as has also been suggested by archivists and other personnel of Catholic offices in Cuba. This highlights the political and politicized dimensions of secrecy in the archival policies of the Catholic Church. In addition to such political sensitivities, protection of the still-present individuals whose ideas and actions are exposed in archival records is a dimension of the silence as well. It is also linked to protecting the personal integrity of particular individuals.<sup>17</sup>

Sometimes silence results from conflict and oppression.<sup>18</sup> As is the case with the Catholic archives in Cuba, this ultimately portrays the archival records as casualties in the contest over power and authority between the Cuban State and the Church on the island. Unfortunately, some of the silences stemming from the Church–State tension are permanent. Documents have been lost or damaged beyond repair. Sometimes written accounts were not even created; perhaps an event was considered too mundane to be documented, or documenting certain events was consciously avoided due to their controversial nature. At times, what used to exist as a document in the archive no longer does: the ultimate silence of the archive was the result of willful destruction.<sup>19</sup> In Cuba, the recollections of Catholics suggest that the disposal of documentation took place in the early years of the 1960s; witnesses to the events vividly recall smelling papers being burned when ecclesial hierarchy found it best to dispose of documentation that could be considered politically damning to the Church from the revolutionary perspective.

The Cuban Catholic archives have, in the past, been subject to multiple processes of selection, including what was written down in the first place. In the first years of the revolution, ecclesial authorities exercised power to decide what was written down while leaving other topics undocumented. In the fierce years of the Church–State confrontation, the documents that were burned in bonfires or otherwise destroyed, or else never recorded in written form in the first place, were subject to a selective process. Consequently, a process of selection determined what was archived. In later episodes of the past, a selective process reinforced the prevailing archival policy of classification and unavailability.

Yet the Catholic Church in Cuba has also engaged in a process of selection in both allowing me to access previously unexplored archives *and* in determining which documentation

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14 Orsi 2010, xxviii–xxx.

15 Douglas Booth calls this refiguring the archive: posing question about the power imposed on and exercised by an archive instead of treating the archive as a passive repository of knowledge. Booth 2006.

16 Fowler 2017, 22–29.

17 Booth 2006.

18 Fowler 2017, 9–14.

19 Fowler 2017, 29–34; Johnson 2017, 106.

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in the archives would be accessible for scholarly use. What was given to me to read was an outcome of a selective process, through which ecclesial authorities exercised their power to define the parameters for acceptable exceptions to the silence. Additionally, what remained in the archives out of my reach in their classified state, at least for this project, was the outcome of a selective process. Archives became a site of power over knowledge of the past:<sup>20</sup> the power of the archives was exercised through the process of selection. Behind the power lay the dynamics of the Church and Cuban State, and most importantly, the interactive dynamics of the two. Catholic archives must therefore be examined as a dualistic reality of the Cuban context: simultaneously Cuban and Catholic, autonomous yet marked by the past in everything they are and produce.

### 2.2. Oral History Politics

Oral histories have become a significant source of information for scholars of the Cuban revolution. Given the revolutionary silence of the archives, they provide scholars with windows into the otherwise omitted historical experiences of Cubans in the revolution.<sup>21</sup> Although the use of oral histories as historical sources warrants particular methodological attention and consideration on the nature of orally verbalized recollections, in the Cuban context oral accounts of the past shed valuable light on undocumented, unarchived histories and on histories whose archival accounts are not yet accessible. Although challenging, oral histories of the revolution are also rewarding: revealing in their novelty, they give voice to previously unknown or unrecognized experiences, and have become an increasingly recognized necessity for a balanced, well-rounded account of the revolution's history.<sup>22</sup>

In contemporary Cuba, persistent issues emerge when weighing the use of oral histories. The politics of memory and politicized memories have had an effect on scholarly work. Scholars of the revolution have often navigated distinct Cuban circumstances of public reminiscence: the persistence of revolutionary narratives in public memory, an imperative of official silence on public recollection imposed by the revolutionary authorities, and legitimization of established narratives and frameworks for acceptable collective remembrance and discourse. Correspondingly, Cuban voices have been heard through and placed within politicized and polarized frameworks outside of the island.<sup>23</sup>

Within the Catholic communities of Cuba, experiences of exclusion and marginalization have led to the silence of oral histories in addition to the institutional silence of the archives. At the core of the silence of oral accounts lies the experience of the past as silenced memories in juxtaposition to the revolution's politics of memory: they stand in contrast to the collective frames of remembrance within the revolutionary paradigm, the publicly acknowledged, accepted, and rejected forms of expression and discourse on the past. Therefore, the experiences

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20 For a discussion on power and the production of knowledge in archives, see Trouillot 2015.

21 Oral history has been employed as a methodological approach to and discussed in the studies of the revolution by, for instance, Sweig 2002; Guerra 2012; Hamilton 2012; Macle Cruz 2019. Among the well-known research projects focusing on oral history and the Cuban revolution are the "Memories of the Cuban Revolution" Oral History Project and the "Cuban Voices" Project, both led by Elizabeth Dore as the pre-eminent specialist of oral history studies on Cuba.

22 Gleijeses 2002; Chase 2015; Hatzky 2015; Schmidt 2015.

23 Gleijeses 2002, 217; De La Torre 2003, 14; Guerra 2012, 35; Chase 2015, 18; Hatzky 2015, 8; Schmidt 2015, 5–7.

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and memories of Cuban Catholics are not publicly shared within Cuban society nor are they easily recollected for those considered “outsiders” in any manner. They remain histories recollected and interpreted within the Church; as repositories of memory, they are considered private property of the Church and the Catholic community.

In the process of collecting oral histories, some of the interviewees expressed, either explicitly or implicitly, anxiety or discomfort at the prospect of sharing their stories. Some verbalized fear of being overheard, listened upon, or otherwise being under surveillance. Some refused to be interviewed, while others objected to any recordings being made of the sessions. Some would self-regulate their words, for instance replacing verbal expressions with hand gestures when referring to the leadership of the revolution or the State authorities. Others were worried about saying the names of people still alive within either the Church or the government. Some referred to their experiences as something that “*officially* did not happen” or as “one of those things you don’t talk about.”

Yet the process of collecting oral histories also showed that both within and outside the established frames of public discourse, individuals lead their daily lives with accounts of the past included in their layered, complex stories of the Cuban revolutionary experience. Even if histories of Catholicism are not publicly acknowledged histories of the revolution, they are the histories of individuals who have lived through the revolution. Personal experiences and human emotions break down the barriers of what is acceptable and approved of as true dimensions of human life regardless of any established frameworks and paradigms. Webs of relations between individuals, between the past and the present, and the multiple meanings given to these webs, surpass the requirements imposed by institutions. Official policies and unpronounced imperatives cannot color over the spectrum of emotions; top-down reinforcement of social behavior could not impede individual expression; the rich array of experiences in human life cannot be contained by man-made boundaries. Behind closed doors, individuals find ways to navigate their personal histories within and against the frameworks of public narratives.

On one specific occasion, after I had conducted a number of interviews, two interlocutors of oral histories came together. In a spontaneous manner, the two elderly Cuban Catholics from the first generation of the revolution engaged in a conversation about what they had experienced and how they had interpreted those experiences later on. The two did not know each other prior to the encounter; the only common denominator they established was having lived through the revolution as practicing Catholics and having agreed to disclose some of those memories in an interview. They found such similarities in their experiences that the conversation hardly ceased, with both acknowledging that it was one of the few times they had shared these histories and recognized a stranger’s experience in as their own. The example illustrates the nature of this type of memory being deeply personal, only rarely shared outside the innermost circles of intimacy. At the same time, it is an illustrative example of the universality of the experiences within the Catholic community on the island and of the persistent silence in sharing Catholic experiences of the revolution in a public manner.

### 3. Accessing Classified Archives

In the course of this research, more than 40,000 pages of previously unstudied archival sources were made available for my use by the Catholic Church in Cuba. These unstudied collections form the core of the body of primary sources in this work and provide new openings in

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international scholarship on Cuba. As accessing previously unstudied sources that are still considered classified is both an exceptional opportunity and a rare occasion for a historian, the process of navigating them to uncover novel knowledge about the past illustrates not only the methodological process of this study but also the future opportunities to further disclose information about existing archival material and give more scholarly attention to the still-unexplored histories of the revolution.

All the primary sources for this study were accessed and collected in Cuba between December 2014 and July 2017. Within four periods of work, ranging from one to five months each, I spent 11 months on the island consulting the documents in the archives and conducting interviews with Cuban Catholics. The exceptional opening of the archives of the Catholic Church for this study was a result of long periods of stay, an increased sense of familiarity and trust,<sup>24</sup> and mutual respect. In a similar manner, oral histories became accessible through prolonged periods of stay within communities and engagement in people's daily lives.

Additionally, the course of history played a role during the initial stage of the opening of the Catholic archives. The negotiations for accessing classified records began at a favorable moment, as my first period of research on the island coincided with the grand historic turn of the Cuban revolution in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century: the rapprochement of Cuba and the United States and the reestablishment of diplomatic relations in December 2014.<sup>25</sup> As the sense of new winds of change sweeping over the island could be vividly felt on the streets of Havana, the Catholic Church was presented in a positive light due to its mediatory role in the process,<sup>26</sup> providing unprecedented momentum for the opening of the archives.

Conversation, negotiation and dialogue paved the way for reaching an agreement on the opening of the archives, which proceeded as a gradual and cumulative process. Since the archives of the Catholic Church are not officially open for research, there was no protocol for accessing them. Therefore, the negotiations took many forms ranging from official and hierarchical to the informal and personal. When first attempting to establish contacts from Finland with the right persons in Cuba, I did not receive any responses. In the beginning of my first visit to Cuba, which lasted five months in total, I was at first denied appointments or else was received as a courtesy only. After the first breakthrough, establishing mutual acknowledgment that there indeed was a collection of documents somewhere, I would be told that I might be able to consult a library but that the archival collections were out of the question.

As I continued to return to the premises to negotiate access to the archive, I was told that I would have to appeal my case to a higher ranking person in the ecclesial office. I would sit and wait for hours for the official to appear. I would introduce my work and myself; we would

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24 Macle Cruz (2019) argues that "Cuba grants exceptional authorizations to consult restricted documentation only to those whom it 'trusts.'" Despite his argument referring to the archival policies of the Cuban State, I concur with Macle Cruz's view and further acknowledge the importance of critical reflection on the construction of trust, personal favors, and interpersonal relations with their possible implications on historiographical production, scholarly biases, and interpretative processes.

25 On December 17, 2014, President Raúl Castro and President Barack Obama announced the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States, bringing to an end the rupture initiated in January 1961. During his visit to Cuba in March 2016, President Obama affirmed that a central motivation of the rapprochement was to "to bury the last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas." For the Cuba-US rapprochement, see LeoGrande & Kornbluh 2015.

26 For more information on the role of the Catholic Church in the Cuba-US rapprochement process, see Kuivala 2017b.

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talk for long periods of time, often for hours, about anything but the archives. When I would bring up the topic of accessing the archives, the first response would be a categorical “no.” I would leave the office with a promise to return in a few days to ask again. In the meantime, I continued to establish relations, to genuinely learn about the life and stories of the people that I met, to build new bridges for eventually gaining access to the archives.

After several renewed attempts and lengthy negotiations, I would receive a “maybe,” which would eventually be formulated as a “come back on Wednesday, I’ll see what I can do.” Finally, sometimes weeks or months after the initial contact, small stacks of papers would be placed on the table, made ready for me to begin browsing through them. When I would ask for more folders, I would be told “that’s all we have” as a response. I would point out that a folder was clearly missing or that someone had already referred to a new collection over a cup of coffee; the next day, a new pile of documents would be placed on the table. The process continued until at some, almost mysterious, point I no longer had to retrace my steps in order to keep moving forward; the folders would just keep appearing according to my requests, or I would be allowed to browse all of the documents by myself.

The process usually proceeded as a top-down process, following the hierarchical order of Catholic ecclesial offices, yet it gained both legitimacy and velocity from the grassroots level. Word-of-mouth introductions and recommendations were instrumental to my making such progress;<sup>27</sup> my research was sustained by the culture of informal encounters and networks of relations, communication, and peer support, *lo informal* as it is commonly referred to in the Cuban context.<sup>28</sup> Human interaction and bonding, forging connections beyond official and formal settings, forming friendships and entering into a process of mutual learning and trust based on acquaintanceship, were crucial to both my gaining access to the archives and to the oral histories of previously unaccounted episodes and experiences of Cuban Catholics. The simultaneously institutional, informal, and interpersonal process proceeded as a snowball effect: after the first openings, new Catholic officials would employ the policy of exception, allowing me to consult the archival collections under their supervision. They also referred me to each other, providing information on the whereabouts and contents of other collections.<sup>29</sup> Word travelled from mouth to mouth that a scholar had been allowed into the archives and that she continued her journey in tracking down the sources to subsequent archival sites. Consequently, when I knocked on a new door, they would already be waiting for my arrival.

The work of establishing common ground for navigating and negotiating archival policies was built on both scholarly and personal credibility as well as disciplinary approaches to

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27 A particularly enlightening example was brought to my knowledge after I concluded my work in a diocesan archive. The person in charge of granting me access to the archive confided that a factor contributing significantly to my gaining access to the archive had been my interaction with not only representatives of the ecclesial hierarchy but secretaries, household staff, chauffeurs, and residents of the town passing by the ecclesial premises. As I had engaged in discussions with them, they had put in a good word for me or made a positive assessment of my work on the grounds of personal encounters.

28 In Cuba, informality and the social structures based on informal encounters are referred to as *lo informal*. The concept includes, for instance, informal know-how regarding interpersonal relations and the codes of social conduct as well as the publicly acknowledged importance of the informal networks and person-to-person connections for everyday life. Fernández 2000.

29 Piero Gleijeses, a historian among the few scholars who have gained access to the archives of the Cuban State, describes a similar process in his analysis on the archival policies and the opening of the archives in Cuba. Gleijeses calls the interpersonal exchange “establishing links,” which allowed him to negotiate access to the archives. See Gleijeses 2002 & 2013.

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examining the histories of Catholicism in the revolution. Central to the exchange that eventually led to the opening of the archives was the localization of my work in the field of theology and religious studies and my disciplinary background as an academic scholar of theology. The disciplinary positioning of my research in theology and church history was greeted with a sense of sharing a common intellectual discourse with the Catholic Church, although as a scholar of theology my disciplinary background is not rooted in Catholic theology per se. In the Cuban context, where theology as an academic discipline does not pertain to the curricula of contemporary universities, which are committed to the ideology of the revolution, the Catholic Church particularly values academic theology and acknowledges the relevance of theological methodology to studying the church history of the Cuban revolution.

In addition, the Catholic Church in Cuba identified me as a European scholar, in contrast to working within Cuban or North American contexts when studying Cuba and the Cuban revolution.<sup>30</sup> A similar effect of citizenship has been noted, for instance, by Jalane D. Schmidt, a citizen of the United States herself, who in her ethnographic work in Cuba experienced “mistrust that still defines relations between our respective countries.” According to Schmidt, in scholarly work this mistrust “sometimes colors interpersonal relations between Cuban and U.S. nationals”.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, Carmelo Mesa-Lago points out that particularly American scholars have on many occasions in the last four decades been denied visas by both the U.S. and Cuban governments and have thus struggled with gaining access to primary sources and conducting fieldwork.<sup>32</sup> Particularly regarding access to Cuban archives, Jorge Macle Cruz has discussed the general difficulties of both foreign and Cuban scholars to conduct archival research on the island with post-1959 records.<sup>33</sup>

Further contributing to the opening of the archives to me, and serving as powerful testimony to the emphasis placed on human encounter and *lo informal*, was my personal background as an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. As a citizen of Finland and an academic theologian, and having been ordained into ministry, I was placed in the dual role of conducting research simultaneously as an outsider and an insider.<sup>34</sup> Politically, I was considered an outsider in Cuba: I was not believed to possess any inherent relations to or perspectives on the Cuban revolution or to the Catholic Church in the revolution. As a scholar not born on the island or with Cuban family background, and having led my life in a culturally different environment far from Cuba, yet one that is not foreign to Christianity or Catholicism, the Church found my position credible from the standpoint of scholarly transparency.

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30 Regarding both the historical and prevailing political and politicized binaries concerning Cuban studies on the island and in the United States, Bustamante & Lambe (2019) argue that the “scholars of revolutionary Cuba working outside of the United States—in Europe, Latin America, and Canada, for instance—have tended to swim in less tumultuous political waters, and many have generated prodigious bodies and intellectual ties to the island.” Bustamante & Lambe 2019, 13.

31 Schmidt 2015, 7.

32 Mesa-Lago 1992, 32.

33 Macle Cruz 2019.

34 For a theoretical discussion on the insider/outsider perspectives in the study of religion, see Knott 2010. For a discussion on the nature of the study of religion as a field of crossing binaries, immersing in differences and otherness, and drawing on the intersubjective experiences of connectedness and separation from others, see Orsi 2005, 177–178, 182.

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Yet at the same time, I was clearly identified as an insider by the Catholic Church in Cuba. The Church found legitimacy for my work from the disciplinary background of European theological discourse. My background as an academic theologian and an ordained Lutheran pastor existed both simultaneously and became intertwined for the Catholic communities in Cuba. In the course of my fieldwork, we frequently discussed ecumenism as offering a perspective on cooperation: the time spent within the Catholic Church on the island also demarcated an opportunity for previously unexplored ecumenical encounter and dialogue. Naturally, the simultaneous layers of engagement also required continuous auto-critical reflection on my work and interpersonal webs of engagement in Cuba.

With respect to the human dimension of gaining access to the archives, it is also significant to remark that the archival policies of the Catholic Church in Cuba and the Cuban State continue to resemble each other in the dimension of *lo informal*.<sup>35</sup> This was particularly apparent when I was simultaneously requesting access to archives of the Church and offices of the Cuban government. Apart from accessing previously unstudied Catholic archives in Cuba, this study also examines documentation from archives of the Cuban State. In the archives of MINREX, I was allowed to process Cuba's diplomatic correspondence with the Holy See and internal correspondence of the Cuban ministries on Church–State affairs as a “personal favor.”<sup>36</sup> Officially denied access, I spent several weeks “unofficially” perusing the collections.

Interpersonal interaction played a crucial role in overcoming the silence of the archives. Deciding in the beginning to immerse myself in daily Cuban life, both within and outside the Church, I attempted to increase my experience-based understanding of the multifaceted, often complex realities of everyday life on the island. I resided in the private homes of Cubans as well as premises of the Catholic Church during my periods of fieldwork in Cuba. This allowed me daily interactions and dialogue with the community within which I was conducting my research. It also allowed me to develop an ongoing dialogue with the interlocutors of the community, some of whom were either affiliated with the archives or turned out to play a role in the oral histories explored in this study. Considering the complex, sensitive layers of silence within both the Catholic Church in Cuba and the Cuban revolutionary reality, and particularly in terms of the relations between the two of them, it would not have been possible to access information in any other way but from within.

Accessing the Catholic archives and finding key interlocutors for the oral histories proceeded in a cumulative manner. This gradual opening of access to information followed the principles of a snowball effect: the process was initiated by originally gaining the trust of and access to the first informants, followed by the key informants introducing me to others, who then both assessed my request for information and used the previous informants as factors in their judgment, ultimately allowing me to have access to new information.<sup>37</sup> Much of the foundation for accessing the oral histories of a sensitive, even intimate, nature was established in the day-to-day presence and interactions with the Catholic community, in the repeated discourse of reliability and confidentiality, through the human dimension of personal encounters. Participation in the daily life of the communities, the shared realities, and having true relations with the subjects stemmed from ethnographic sensitivity, upon which was built a

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35 See Macle Cruz 2019.

36 Also Gleijeses discusses the effect of personal favors on accessing Cuban archives. See Gleijeses 2002.

37 Polsky 1967, 129.

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mutual understanding that resulted in the first opening of the Catholic archives of the revolutionary era and disclosure of previously unexplored histories.

The work of a historian may be a work of solitude, a daily exercise accompanied by stacks of papers, ink, and folders. Sometimes the only voices a historian can hear are those arising from the documents; voices from the past reaching into the present in the historian's imagination. Luckily, this is not the case in Cuba. In the archives of the Catholic Church and the Cuban State, daily work is filled with the sound of cars, dogs barking, and landline phones ringing; it is filled with the sound of *padres* and other personnel comings and goings, with exchanging greetings and kisses on the cheek. We shared coffee and lunches, and we grew acquainted with one another in the course of such encounters. In this very practical sense, a historian does not in fact conduct the act of research in a vacuum or in isolation.

Working among living people places a historian at a fascinating junction. How to interact with people in the present when they are affiliated with the past that the scholar is attempting to analyze? In Cuba, the history of the Catholic Church continues to be relived and transmitted by the first generations of Cuban Catholics of the revolutionary era. Although the actual object of scholarly inquiry is in the past, the interlocutors upon whom the researcher relies for information about these histories are very much present in the daily course of the research. Their experience continues to echo in contemporary experiences and interpretations of what it has meant and still means to be a Catholic in revolutionary Cuba. The generations of interlocutors with first-hand knowledge and experience are also subjects, still-active agents operating as interlocutors with subjective perspectives and agency with respect to the past. A great number of said individuals carry within themselves, through their memories and bodies alike, the whole span of their life and lived experience of the revolution, and from this moment they look back into the past to convey their experiences in the present tense. Through this transcending exchange, the community providing the archival records and oral histories is a site of encounter between the scholar and her subject and the past and the present alike.

Similar questions have been raised by scholars such as Robert Orsi, a historian of lived religion. In his monograph *The Madonna of the 115<sup>th</sup> Street. Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950*, Orsi positions himself as a “historian in the field,”<sup>38</sup> using the term to explain a way of navigating between the past and the present as a scholar. The practice entails conducting historical research in the present tense and among contemporary communities that unavoidably transmit historical experiences in their present-tense lives. In his broader body of scholarship, Orsi criticizes the academically constructed division between the past and the present: according to Orsi, the past is merely a construction readily assumed in historical scholarship, ignoring the unavoidable exchange between the present and the past. In his work on the histories of lived religion, Orsi argues that the idea of “the pastness of the past”<sup>39</sup> may and should be criticized as a construction crafted by scholars through the sense of otherness of the people studied as objects of the past—regardless of the same people acting also as subjects in the present—and maintained as a barrier to separate the worlds of the past and the present, although they are inextricably intertwined in the lives and experiences of people.<sup>40</sup>

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38 Orsi 2010, xxviii.

39 Orsi 2010, xxviii–xxix.

40 Orsi 2010, xlv–xlvii.



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From Orsi's framework, I apply his notion of a "historian in the field" to the process of obtaining access to Catholic archives and to the individuals interviewed for oral histories in Cuba. As a historian, I have engaged in a practice Orsi calls "fieldwork between the past and the present,"<sup>41</sup> the act of conducting research in the present as an interaction with and meaning-making exercise with the past. As Orsi also defines research as a web of relationships between people, research may be seen as an intertemporal relationship that bridges the past subject of the study with the interlocutors in the present, both archival and human.<sup>42</sup> In this sense, the historian in the field interacts with the present, and the present reality participates in the construction of interpretations of the past. The focus of the research is situated in a specific moment of time, yet it is transmitted to the present via the exchanges between the agents of history and the scholar—be they in the archives or in oral histories.

In my research, the connection to Orsi's theoretical framework has meant showing sensitivity to the worlds of past and present Catholic lives existing in a constant process of exchange with contemporary Cuba. In this manner, the fieldwork of a historian answers Orsi's call for "courage to allow the worlds to intertwine: the past to show itself in the present and be discussed through its presence."<sup>43</sup> For this exchange, ethnographic awareness has benefitted my study by allowing a more sensitive approach to the voices emerging in contemporary Cuba in order to make sense of and weigh a past that is still considered very much present, albeit publicly unacknowledged. Although ethnography is rarely used as a theoretical framework and ethnographic methods seldom employed in the field of church history from the perspective of more traditional approaches to constructing history from written excerpts of the past, in the case of Cuba they become not only useful but also valid approaches when working as a "historian in the field," as defined by Orsi. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, theology as a scholarly framework makes it possible to pay particular attention to religious constructions, practices, and meaning-making within the Cuban revolutionary reality.

## 4. The Sources of the Study

### 4.1. Archival Sources

The body of primary sources for this dissertation consists of 44,000 pages of previously unstudied Cuban archival sources. These sources open new insights into both Cuban Catholicism and the revolution, and they represent previously unstudied topics and histories of both twentieth-century Catholicism and Cuba.

I was allowed access to eight archives of the Catholic Church in Cuba, specifically their post-1959 records. Ranging from national to diocesan and local, personal archives, the archives are as follows: 1) Archive of the Cuban Catholic Bishops' Conference (*Archivo de la Conferencia de los Obispos Católicos de Cuba*), 2) Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Havana (*Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de La Habana*), 3) Archive of the Chancery of the Diocese of Pinar del Río (*Archivo de la Cancillería del Obispado de Pinar del Río*), 4) Archive of the Diocese of Holguín (*Archivo del Obispado de Holguín*), 5) Archive of the Seminary *San Carlos y San Ambrosio* (*Archivo del Seminario San Carlos y San Ambrosio*), 6)

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41 Orsi 2010, xxvii.

42 Orsi 2003, 172–174; Orsi 2005, 177–178; Orsi 2010, xxviii–xxxi, xlv.

43 Orsi 2010, xxviii–xxxi.

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Private Archive of Father José Félix Pérez Riera, 7) Private Archive of Mariposa de la Cruz (pseudonym), and 8) Private Archive of Juan Varela (pseudonym). In addition to the Catholic archives, I was allowed access to the Central Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba (*Archivo Central del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Cuba*, usually referred to by the acronym *MINREX*). In the José Martí National Library of Cuba (*Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba José Martí*), I consulted both the collection of historical newspapers and singular remaining excerpts of Catholic publications. In the archives of *Vida Cristiana*, in Havana, I digitalized for private use the complete collection of published numbers of *Vida Cristiana* from 1962 to 1986.

For this study, the unprecedented opening of the archives marked several opportunities for producing new scholarly approaches and paradigms. First and foremost, it provided new historical knowledge and enabled the construction of new histories of the revolution. Second, it allowed for a more complex take on the historiography of both the revolution and the study of it, by offering an insight into the production of historiographical knowledge through archival policies of silence and exposure. Third, the vast number of sources enabled an examination of various perspectives and voices, experiences and interpretations of Catholicism in the revolution.

In this study, I approach the archives and collections via the multilayered array of voices they provide, enriching the scholarly examination by the inclusion of previously unaccounted stories and interpretations of the past. The newly available sources offer a striking display of what has previously been silenced, unacknowledged, or unaccounted for: the voices of previously unexplored groups of Cuban Catholics, emerging from the vast body of documentation, pronounce experiences and interpretations that go beyond the records produced institutionally by the Catholic Church in Cuba. As scholars have thus far resorted to the use of publications, statements, and media accounts of Catholicism during the revolution, the voices reflected in their studies have been representative of authoritative stances with normative power. In this study, these narratives are complemented, contrasted, and, ultimately, challenged from within by Catholic voices outside normative positions of authority and power.

In this manner, the new sources significantly add to the inclusion of new, alternative voices, histories, and interpretations of Catholicism in the revolution, including historiographical markers established within Catholic frameworks for understanding history in Cuba. With the large number of new sources, this study constructs a joint account of institutional, grassroots, collective, and individual histories of Catholicism. To this is end, it is arranged according to different voices, such as authoritative and normative voices, or voices of the episcopate, clergy, religious orders and the laity, to better examine the dynamics of discourse within the Catholic Church in Cuba. Whereas preceding scholarly work has focused on the perspectives of the episcopate and clergy, the inclusion of lay voices to intra-ecclesial discourse acknowledges the layers of interpretation from within. By studying the stories of the laity, it is also possible to include voices of women in the story of the Church. Since Catholic ecclesial hierarchy and clergy have been exclusively male domains, women have acquired their influence in religious orders and as part of the laity. The voices of women in religious orders and Cuban Catholic lay women offer a unique perspective into new layers of religious experience on the island.

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The archives contribute to the reconstruction of many different voices with varying quantities and multiple categories of sources. Sources drawn from the Archive of the Cuban Catholic Bishops' Conference contain documentation of the highest authoritative level within the Church: documents from bishops as a collective, with correspondence and notes by individual bishops, representing the magisterial voice of the Catholic Church in Cuba. A great portion of the documentation also pertains to the Cuban Church's foreign relations and communication with local Catholic churches in both Europe and Latin America in the form of official inter-ecclesial correspondence. With these sources, the production of ecclesial normativity becomes visible and approachable: the sources shed light on the authoritative process of negotiating frameworks for Catholic thought and expression both in the revolution and in global Catholicism.

In the Historical Archives of the Archdiocese of Havana, a significant proportion of the documents reflects the experience of lay members of the group Catholic Action in the revolution. The collections include numerous types of documentation: memoranda and minutia, personal and institutional correspondence, intimate and collective remarks, organizational documentation, and materials for study and liturgy. In this study, these sources are treated as voices of the militant laity, a distinctive group of committed Cuban Catholic lay women and men at the intersection of the Church and State. Their voices are both further reinforced and countered by the examination of personal archives of Cuban Catholic individuals, whose collections offer insights into their participation in both ecclesial and revolutionary life on the island.

In each diocesan archive, the collections of episcopal documentation ranged from authoritative records to personal correspondence, and from lay groups to individuals whose voices have been placed in the repositories of the Church. In Pinar del Río and Holguín, the value of the diocesan records was that they provided traces of local histories; in comparison with Havana as the capital and largest single archival site consulted for this study, the provincial archives reflect the interplay between the centers and peripheries of ecclesial life on the island. In these collections, clerics reflect on their work in rural Cuba, a parish council records detailed memoranda of its meetings, and the revolutionary process is present on the pages through its meaning for local Catholic communities. However, the archival categories were not always clear: for instance, diocesan archives of Havana and Pinar del Río contain material produced in the Archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba and Diocese of Matanzas as well.

In the Seminary of *San Carlos and San Ambrosio* (*Seminario San Carlos y San Ambrosio*), I worked with archival collections stored in the seminary's current location in Guanabacóa, on the outskirts of Havana. The most significant component of the 5000 pages of documentation consulted in the seminary are academic curricula and course materials for seminarians and students of theology and philosophy, mostly dating to the 1970s. These sources enable a study of the theological thought and ecclesiological meaning-making of clerics in the revolution. At the same time, they provide a rich display of generational voices, new voices emerging within the Cuban clergy, and voices pronouncing new interpretations at the intersections of religion and the revolution.

In the Central Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba (MINREX), the documents consulted consist of diplomatic correspondence between the Holy See and MINREX and internal correspondence of the Cuban governmental offices and

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ministries regarding the Catholic Church. While some of the documentation focuses on the official communication of the ministry with the Holy See, other parts of it discuss the relations with the Catholic Church in Cuba by outlining the government's responses to the Holy See via international exchange of opinions. With these collections, my understanding was that the documents available for scholarly study have been selected through a process of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>44</sup> I argue that the collections I was able to browse did not contain all of the correspondence, as was evident from missing letters, gaps in correspondence, the lack of responses in between the internal exchanges of the ministry, abrupt changes in topics, and references to discussions that were not present in the collections despite clearly belonging to the same stream of exchange.

This study recovers Cuban Catholic voices previously unknown to scholarship. Altogether, the sources drawn from the archives represent new voices in the study of both Cuban Catholicism and the revolution. In the context of international scholarship on Cuba, these sources represent previously unaccounted histories on the island. As such, they have directed the scope and focus of this research: the exceptional opening of the archives has determined that Cuban voices, voices from within the revolutionary reality, comprise the primary framework of this study. The emphasis on the Cuba-centered sources points to the direction of Cuban Catholic historiography on the island: the frames of knowledge on the island make it possible to historicize the Church's experience from within, as recounted by voices on the island.

This has, consequently, contributed to the process of excluding certain bodies of sources and their narratives. As both scholarship and public discourse have put a predominant emphasis on Cuban Catholic voices in the diaspora, this study is an attempt to shift the lens and recapture the histories of Catholic experiences on the island. It has thus been a conscious choice to limit the body of sources to collections present on the island and not include Catholic sources produced by Cubans in the United States. As the diaspora perspective has come to dominate the discourse on the Catholic experience in the revolution, and as scholars have been provided more access to historical sources within the diaspora, Catholic experiences on the island have been overshadowed by the voices from outside it. Despite the inevitable interconnectedness of Cuban and Cuban-American histories, and despite the profoundly significant experiences of Catholicism in the Cuban diaspora, in this research these accounts are woven into the histories of Catholicism in Cuba. Thus, this study gives precedence to the voices of Cuban Catholics on the island with respect to the exile experience as recounted in the diaspora.

An essential contribution of my research is the production of new knowledge on archival policies and structures in Cuba. Together with the silence of the archives, the great majority of the Catholic archives containing the sources used for this study were, at the time of consultation, unorganized and uncatalogued.<sup>45</sup> In the appendices of this dissertation, photographic evidence

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44 Gleijeses presents a similar argument, calling the process the "sanitizing" of official MINREX documents admitted to his use. See Gleijeses 2013.

45 See Appendix 2, pictures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. According to Macle Cruz, disorganization is a generally prevailing condition of Cuban post-1959 archives: document management, classification, and cataloging remain a task for archivists to take up. Macle Cruz 2019; A competing vision is provided by the archival directory of Catholic Action in Havana. Documents dated to 1961 discuss the archival policy and the guidelines for organizing the documents, revealing a well-kept, promptly and chronologically organized archive of the correspondence by the national committees of Catholic Action. According to the memos from 1961, the archive dates back to 1941. The policy of

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provides further information on the state of the archives.<sup>46</sup> To this end, the classification system used in the footnotes of this study was created by the author. In some cases, I was clearly the first person to read through the historical documents since they had first been archived. In the Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Havana, for instance, I was allowed to open parcels containing documents that had been sealed together with their contents in the first years of the 1980s.<sup>47</sup> For a historian, those moments are both exciting and emotional. Aware of the need to carefully document my work for its unusual nature, I have personally taken digital photographs of all the archival documents that I worked with in the Cuban archives. All the archival sources referred to in the footnotes of this study remain in my possession as photographs.<sup>48</sup>

Since I was not once forbidden from taking photos of the documentation, the total number of digital photographs in my possession exceeds 40,000. In addition, I kept both written and photographic journals of my research process in the archives,<sup>49</sup> which also enabled a deeper reflection on archival policies and the process of gaining access to previously unexplored documents. Apart from photographs of the documentation, I also documented the archival systems, conditions of work, and the daily course of the research process in a photographic journal. Meticulous documentation of the research process also helped me establish patterns of work and routines in consulting the documentation and processing information in sustainable ways, especially considering the vast number of documents and their state of disarray, both of which required specific attention and planning.

I was allowed to work in each of the archives without being monitored. I was never requested to physically treat the documents in a certain way or to process them according to a particular protocol. In some of the archives, I was allowed to remove the documents from the physical archive and keep them in my possession while reviewing them. Most times, all of this took place within the physical walls of the ecclesial offices that hosted the archives. These examples illustrate the informal nature of the archival culture: as these collections were consulted for the first time in my research, they did not pertain to the tradition of strict archival protocol, but instead allowed for considerable creativity and fluidity into the consultation process.

With such an overwhelming amount of historically relevant documentation that has, for the most part, not previously been used by scholars, it is clear that not every document can be referenced directly in the course of a singular monograph. Thus, the archival sources referred to on the pages of this work serve as the most essential cases and enlightening examples

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the organization was maintained until 1967. While the archive was earlier maintained as Catholic Action's independent archive, by the time of consultation for this study (2015–2017), it was located within the Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Havana, consisting of an extensive amount of documents dating to 1959–1967. A comparison of the guidelines drafted in 1961 and the current state of the archive revealed virtually no changes in the classification system and the order of organization, which further testifies to the collection remaining unconsulted and unaltered by neither archivists nor scholars.

46 See Appendices 2 and 3.

47 See Appendix 2, picture 3.

48 The importance of backing scholarly arguments with physical evidence, when working with primary sources not open for scholarly study without external restrictions, is discussed by Gleijeses regarding the research he conducted in the Cuban State archives. Gleijeses emphasizes the importance of verifiable primary sources and the accessibility to authentic documents. Thus, he only included in his studies documents remaining in his possession as photocopies. See Gleijeses 2002; Gleijeses 2013.

49 Some of the photographic evidence is presented in Appendices 2 and 3.

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reflecting broader ideas and developments that I discuss in course of this dissertation. Through a meticulous process of close reading, this selection nonetheless represents a substantial collection of sources referred to within the limited space of a monograph. These documents are simultaneously representative of a significantly larger body of primary sources, all of which have been examined in the course of the research process.

To clarify the use of singular archival records as examples pertaining to a larger body of documentation, either in the collections or by the grand themes of documentation, I address particular sources via the attribute “for instance” in the footnotes. In some particular cases, mostly regarding the internal correspondence of the Catholic Church in Cuba, I reference some of the documents with the initials of the individuals who either sent or received the letters. In these cases, the policy has been established following my own judgment and the fact that some of the individual subjects of the correspondence are, to my knowledge, still alive. As a standard procedure, in these cases I have decided to anonymize the correspondence as the policy does not affect the analysis drawn on the sources.

With archival documentation, the meticulous use of footnotes is grounded in the motivation to provide readers with accurate information on the previously unknown and unstudied categories of archival sources; furthermore, detailed analysis of the referenced sources also allowed me to distinguish between the overlapping, intertwining voices arising from the documents as well as variations in geographical locations. For the same reason, in the footnotes I provide detailed excerpts of the primary sources in Spanish in order to highlight particularly interesting choices of words, accentuate tones of discussion, or emphasize significant details provided by the sources.

### **4.2. Interviews**

In my research, the sources of oral history recover episodes, experiences and interpretations of the past that were rarely put into writing and stored in the archives by the Catholic Church in Cuba. The interviews conducted for the study reveal sensitive intra-ecclesial, political, and social matters, on the one hand, while on the other they focus on deeply personal recollections from the course of human life. Thus, they are, at the same time, individual and collective by nature. They are the histories of individual Cuban Catholics recounting their own lives and experiences, but, as such, they also belong to the experiences shared by many Catholics in the revolution: forming a collective experience, they reflect upon the life of the Church in the revolutionary reality. This is particularly apt from the perspective of ecclesiology: recognizing the Church as a collection of individuals sharing a sense of community and collective experiences that, in turn, shape the perception of the Church and Christian community accordingly.

This study includes 31 individual interviews, all of which were personally conducted among Cuban Catholics on the island. The interviews, conducted in Spanish, took place between January 2015 and July 2017. The time spent in session ranged from 45 to 120 minutes. Most of the interviews (27) were singular occasions. With four of the interviewees, I conducted two separate interviews on two different occasions, with the intermission ranging from two months to two years. All the interviewees I found through personal connections; 24 of the interviews were prearranged, while seven took place in a spontaneous setting. The interviewees came from all ranks of the ecclesial ministry: clergy, religious orders, and the laity. All the

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individuals had been active in the Church within the time frames of this study: some had been active throughout the decades of inquiry, while other others had exercised ecclesial activity only during certain periods. Further information on the interviewees is provided in chapter IX.

For this study, the interviews cover topics not discussed in the written records and open up individual's perspectives on histories that would otherwise remain institutional. They fill in the silences of the archives and official records, and they challenge both simplistic and unilateral historiographies and policies that reflect the institutionalization of histories as official and established. The essential contribution of oral history in this study is the human dimension of the Catholic Church in the revolution: the personally recounted lived experiences, emotions, and interpretations of Cuban Catholics within the revolutionary reality. As such, these histories of Cubans Catholics verbalize historical episodes of the revolution from new perspectives: they reflect both individual and collective experiences of continuity and change, ruptures and logic by engaging in a continuous process of interpretation and meaning-making. For this reason, oral histories may emphasize valuable perspectives on change and continuity in wider frameworks over longer periods of the revolution's history, including the interplay of established and experienced patterns of the past.<sup>50</sup> In oral histories, the words and practices emanating from the Cuban streets may be expressed and analyzed in contrast to the official policies and public discourse on the revolution, but they may also give voice to the reflections on those more official histories that have seeped into both individual and collective awareness.

In revolutionary Cuba, the oral histories of Cuban Catholics narrate the experiences of living in the margins of the revolution as both individuals and a group. As argued by both oral historians and Cuba scholars, oral history contributes to the critical analysis of a group that is considered a minority, a group in the margins, disregarded by the more traditional, conventional, and often, institutional histories.<sup>51</sup> In this regard it is crucial to acknowledge that the oral histories of individual Cuban Catholics not only contest the historical narratives of the revolution; sometimes they also contrast with the histories constructed within the Catholic Church itself. As such, these histories of lived experiences both complement and challenge the institutional histories of Catholicism in the revolution, recounted by both the Church and the revolution in their own ways.

Essentially, the oral histories analyzed here reflect an individual's subjective recollections of the past: the histories of Cuban Catholics as recounted by themselves. They are personal accounts of experiences and feelings, the moments and phenomena that defined the course of life at the time. At the same time, they are stories about the past pronounced in the present, with the interplay of memory and interpretation.<sup>52</sup> As such, they are not transparent records of the past: a shared perception of scholars is that in Cuba, oral histories connect with the official ideology of the revolution either by assimilation or contrast, by political and social polarization, and by the many meanings of the revolutionary process for Cubans, both individual and collective, private and public.<sup>53</sup> The layers of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity add to the

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50 Hamilton 2012, 4; Lambe 2017, 6.

51 Abrams 2010, 5, 151, 159–161, 163, 173–174; Chase 2015, 17–18; Schmidt 2015, 7–8; Macle Cruz 2019.

52 For a discussion regarding the role of memory and remembrance in the studies of oral history, see Abrams 2010, 79, 86–90; Ritchie 2015, 14–22.

53 In Cuban studies, the nature of oral histories of the revolution has been discussed, among others, by Hamilton 2012, Chase 2015, Schmidt 2015. For discussions on collective, public memory and oral history, see Abrams 2010, 95–103; Ritchie 2015, 21–22.

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multidimensional nature of an individual's recollections of the past. Oral histories are someone's version of the past as it has been experienced and, later, interpreted. Therefore, they not only speak of what happened, but also of how it was interpreted and what the cumulative process of reinterpretation meant and continues to mean for those involved.<sup>54</sup>

The close historical proximity of the archives to the present offered the unique opportunity to interact with the interlocutors of archival materials through oral histories as well. I encountered some of the interviewees through archival documentation, which later led me to pursue oral histories as a means of further expanding on ideas originally suggested by the archival sources. Since the same generations recorded in and recording the documental sources are still alive in Cuba, I was able to come face to face with the actual subjects and agents present in the periods and episodes I analyze.

In selecting the interviewees, I also allowed *lo informal* to direct the process: some of the interviewees pointed me in the direction of new interviewees, while some of the current representatives of the Catholic Church in Cuba also offered me suggestions on who to meet in order to gather information or become aware of new directions of information. In these cases, I critically considered the suggestions: I was not systematically led to reach specific paths of thought or conclusions by the suggestions. I also noted that the interviewees suggested by other members of the ecclesial community represented a wide range of theological, political, and social opinions, not always agreeing with the person who brought them to my awareness in the first place. This snow-ball effect<sup>55</sup> thus resulted in more narrators entering the story with a greater diversity of voices recounting their experiences.

A certain structure has prevailed in all the interviews conducted for this study: semi-structured interviews with a prearranged thematic composition gave the conversation both focus and flow. Each interview thus included a set of prepared themes and topics of conversation.<sup>56</sup> If the interviewee had been active in a certain function of the Church in a certain decade, a set of questions focused on those themes. While allowing the interviewees sufficient time and space to pronounce what they personally considered essential in their life as Catholics in the revolution through open-ended questions at the beginning of the interviews, all of the specific questions were anchored to historical events and periods of time with thematic topics preselected by the interviewer. Yet, as interviews are communicative events, the oral histories gathered for this study are a result of the interaction between the scholar and the interviewee. Several occasions during the process proved that an interviewee does not always surrender herself to a predetermined, straightforward set of questions and answers, but rather involves dialogue and discourse, information-sharing and a mix of facts and feelings.<sup>57</sup>

In this study, all the oral histories are referred to anonymously. Most of the interviewees requested anonymity and, in some cases, even listed it as a precondition before disclosing any information. As a result of my own careful estimation of the general sensitivity of the histories

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54 Abrams 2010, 8, 55–60.

55 In Cuban studies, a similar method has been used by Carrie Hamilton in her research on oral histories of sexuality in revolutionary Cuba. In her study, Hamilton defines the snow-ball effect in the selection of interviewees as a method “whereby interviewees are contacted through one another.” According to Hamilton, the use of the method makes it possible to surpass the established frameworks for public and official recollection and uniform histories often encountered in the social histories of the revolution. Hamilton 2012, 6.

56 Ritchie 2015, 81–83.

57 Abrams 2010, 10, 60–70; Ritchie 2015, 14.



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shared in the interviews, I have chosen to treat all oral histories of this study as anonymous and made the interviewees aware of the fact prior to the interview. In several cases, the interviewees confirmed that anonymity would allow them to speak with more ease or less anxiety. Anonymity is a justifiable, although not preferred, choice in interviews when there is evidence of an individual's concern about exposing his identity and its consequences.<sup>58</sup> Some of the concerns were clearly verbalized by the interviewees. Discussing politically sensitive topics of close historical proximity, histories marked by an interpretation of not belonging to the established historiography of the revolution, exploring family histories that have not been publicly acknowledged, and revealing the identities of third parties not present at the time all belong to the spectrum of reasons arguing for anonymity. In some cases, the non-verbalized concerns were expressed by locked doors, shut windows, and lowered or whispered voices when relating histories deemed possibly harmful or distressing by the interviewee.

Similar concerns were expressed on recordings made of the interviews: of the 31 oral histories referred to in this study, 17 are in my possession as recordings on video varying in their length from 45 to 120 minutes, with adjacent notes serving as an index of the recording. With the rest of the interviews, it was not possible to make a digital record either due to the interviewee's request or limitations imposed by the circumstances. In these cases, written notes exist of all the interviews. On two occasions, I was requested to take notes in Finnish instead of Spanish or English to avoid identification and public exposure of what was discussed. In the text, if an oral history is quoted either by indentation or the use of quotation marks, it is a word-by-word excerpt quoted accordingly, and the exact phrasing has been either digitally recorded or written down at the moment it was uttered with due meticulousness.

In order to maintain the anonymity of these individuals on the pages of this study, the oral histories are referred to with numerals. Also, certain facts about the geographical location, specific occupational information, and other details that would point to the identity of the individual are not provided in the context of the interviews. Geographical markers are used in general terms such as "town" and "countryside" or "urban" and "rural". The ecclesial affiliations of the interviewees cover such identities as clergy, member of a religious order, and laypeople. In some cases, I use the gender-specific terms "layman" and "laywoman" if I consider it crucial for understanding the context and significance of the oral history. In the chapter IX, background information is provided on the ecclesial rank, generation, and years of the activity of the interviewees.

In the day-to-day research on the Catholic Church in Cuba, the categories of archival and oral histories became intertwined on several occasions. Other scholars of the Cuban revolution<sup>59</sup> have also found the informants of oral histories instrumental in accessing documental sources. As a result of this fluidity of agency, the interviewees made me aware of new archives and collections, of which no official information existed, and some of them gave me access to their personal archives of historical evidence. When this is the case for the archival sources used in this work, I refer to the collections by pseudonyms in order to maintain the anonymity of the individuals who I came to know as interviewees in the first place.

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58 Ritchie 2015, 120–121.

59 See Gleijeses 2002, 10; Sweig 2002, 193.

### 4.3. Printed Sources

From the early 1960s onwards, little has been produced and published for public, general use by the Catholic Church on the island. The most significant printed sources are the Catholic newspapers and the official publications of the Cuban episcopate and diocesan offices. Yet, the newly opened archives also provide material on both the normative voices of the Church, representing the *magisterium* of the Church in an authoritative manner, and voices contesting the hierarchical distribution of power such as publications by the laity and individual clerics.

The published documentation of the Catholic Church in Cuba represents the official voice of the institution. These documents are normative in their essence: they define the frames for theology, ecclesiology, and pastoral work for the Church in Cuba. They reflect both the global and local authority of the Church. Intended for study and use within the Church, these documents provide lines for accepted and unaccepted interpretations in theology and praxis, while also framing the expectations for the clergy and laity as pronounced by the hierarchy of the Church.

The Catholic Church in Cuba has edited and published some of its official publications as collections, such as *La Voz de la Iglesia en Cuba (100 Documentos Episcopales)*. In the archives of the Church, I encountered original copies of these later widely distributed publications, such as pastoral letters, collective statements by the bishops, and other items published under the authority of the Cuban Catholic Bishops' Conference. These documents I treat as both archival with their various unique drafts and as original versions, and printed as the published, official versions resulting from the editorial process. With the conclusions and summarizing documents of *Reflexión Eclesiástica Cubana* (REC) and *Encuentro Nacional Eclesiástico Cubano* (ENEC), I use the published versions when referring to the final documents and archival documentation when examining the editorial process and discussion preceding the official publications.

In the José Martí National Library, I discovered other printed publications of the Catholic Church in Cuba, such as a 1959 booklet on the National Catholic Conference. Materials such as these I treat as primary sources due their unique nature and standing in the archives as singular, last remaining copies for public use. Similar documents emerged from the Catholic archives as well: *Boletín Eclesiástico* and *Notas para Información del Clero* were both small newsletters and leaflets produced by the Church for the internal use of the clergy. Although they were originally printed and distributed in larger volumes, only the assembled copies held at the Cuban Catholic Bishops' Conference remain as comprehensive collections.

Several documents reflecting the universal magisterium of the Catholic Church are also included in the body of sources. Instead of chronologically including everything published by the Holy See, I weave into the discussion those universal documents that were circulated in Cuba within the time frame of this study and that warranted responses from the Cuban Church. In the process of selecting such documents, one decisive criterion for inclusion has been their appearance either in the Cuban Catholic archives or their inclusion in the discourse conveyed by Cuban primary sources, either written or oral. When, for instance, Cuban sources refer to documents published by the Holy See, I cross-referenced the documents to compare the original texts to how they were interpreted in Cuba. A similar process covers the appearance of papal encyclicals and public addresses; constitutions, declarations, and decrees of the Second Vatican

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Council; references to publications of ecclesial offices worldwide, as well as the published statements and other documentation by the Cuban government.

Additionally, I complement the large number of archival sources with three Cuban Catholic newspapers: *La Quincena*, *Diario de la Marina*, and *Vida Cristiana*. At the time of the consultation, copies of *La Quincena* and *Diario de la Marina* were stored in the newspaper archives of the José Martí National Library (*Biblioteca Nacional José Martí*) in Havana. These publications provide valuable insights into both clerical and lay discourse on the revolutionary process and Catholic participation in the evolving social discourse. The available collections of *La Quincena* and *Diario de la Marina* range only from January 1959 to April 1961, yet within the scope of this study the two publications provide valuable insights into the spectrum and intensity of Catholic discourse on the revolution in the period of heightened tension.

After the disappearance of independent media during the first years of the revolution, *Vida Cristiana* was established in 1962 as the informative voice of the Cuban Church. From 1962 to 1986, this research included select pieces published in *Vida Cristiana*. As the numbers focus on Catholic faith and news of the global Catholic Church, they provide valuable information also on the parameters of permitted expression and censorship in the revolution. For this study, I have systematically read through all existing numbers of these publications: each individual number of the three publications has been consulted and digitally photographed, yet of all the published numbers only those with direct relevance are referred to in the forthcoming chapters. With all three publications, it is essential to note their dualistic nature since they serve not only as sources of the study, but also as subjects of the work, becoming agents and characters in the actual histories they are relaying on their pages.

The only source in this study that was produced directly by the Cuban State is *Fidel y la religión. Conversaciones con Frei Betto*, a compilation of Fidel Castro's conversations with Brazilian Dominican Father Frei Betto, published in 1986. Since Castro focuses on the revolutionary process and Cuban Church-State relations, I treat the discourse as a representation of normative revolutionary historiography as pronounced by the leadership of the revolution. Therefore, I mirror the book against the Catholic sources and analyze the emerging discourse according to how the book was received within the Catholic Church as an example of juxtaposition in the ecclesial history of the revolution.

### 5. Bridging the Voices and Layers of Cuban Catholic History

The unique contribution of this research is the intertwined reading of the institutional and individual histories of Catholicism in the revolution, with a predominant focus on the intrinsically Catholic perspectives to interpreting and making sense of the revolution. The approach of joining together institutional and individual histories of Cuban Catholicism stems from the argument that both dimensions are needed to draw a cohesive picture of the Catholic experience in revolutionary Cuba. In looking at the Church in the revolution, it is not enough to look at the Church as an administrative entity, a collection of offices; nor is it sufficient to look only at the clergy or the religious orders. At the same time, though, it is not enough to look only at the laypeople as a means of capturing the multidimensionality of the Church.

Only when each of these dimensions of ecclesial agency, experience, and discourse are joined together, by weighing their voices in harmony with and against one another, does the concept of the Church emerge with a human dimension. While also reading these types of

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sources against each other, and thus filling in the silences in each one, I read the sources inclusively together as intertwining, yet distinct accounts of the same historical episodes. What ensues from this multidimensional reading is a study of history that takes into account the multiple voices narrating it. Some of those voices are new in their substance in the study of this topic, while others are new in the sense that their tone complements and challenges the prevailing scholarly paradigms and conclusions in the new ways they are used in this study.

It must be noted that neither the sources nor the histories rarely adhere to such straightforward, clear-cut categories as “institutional” and “private.” Archives are more than just “institutional,” although they are maintained and administered by an institution. Oftentimes archival sources are more than just the sources of institutional histories, even if they intrinsically convey the institutional nature of archives and the process of institutionalized appraisal in archival policy; the voices emanating from institutional archives are often also individual and private. On the pages and when reading between the lines written on them, individuals have left traces of their private thoughts and emotions irrespective of the institution they come to represent through the archival process. In a similar manner, oral histories are not only the histories of individuals and their personal experiences; they may also include accounts regarding or on behalf of an institution. As the forthcoming chapters discuss, the production of historiographical knowledge through the voices of authority and normativity must be acknowledged when studying both the Catholic Church and the Cuban State.

These intermixed categories suggest that it would be a forced dichotomy to distinguish between the two layers of history, institutional and lived, as either—or accounts of the past. They are intertwined as profoundly as in the historical accounts of them; they are both—and accounts, existing and finding meaning in a dialogical relation with each other. As will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters, this is an essential consideration when also studying church history in Cuba’s revolutionary setting. Hence, in this study I do not place the lived experiences of Cuban Catholics and the institutional perspectives of Catholic Church against each other as polar opposites, but examine them as two intertwined dimensions and similarly existing realities of Catholicism in Cuba, both challenging and complementing each other, ultimately pertaining to the same domain conceptualized as “the Church”.

When such sources, drawn from multiple archives and collections scattered around Cuba’s urban and rural ecclesial offices, are read together, they make it possible to construct an internal discourse of ecclesial bodies and their representatives in a way that is not only representative in terms of quantity but also with respect to geographical and socio-political factors. Resisting the impulse to view the dominance of Havana as Cuba’s capital as the point of focus for revolutionary discourse, also within the Church, this study draws from source material derived from multiple locations. Taking into account archives and arrays of collections from numerous sites around the island allows for a reading of multiple, simultaneously national and local voices of Catholicism. Reading together sources from cities of power and influence and rural villages at the grassroots level of experience enables a reconstruction of shared, joint histories as well as contrasting, differentiated histories with local variants.

In studies of the Cuban revolution, filling in the silence of the archives with alternative voices has proven crucial for scholars attempting to reconstruct histories outside the officially established frameworks of revolutionary historiography. The use of oral histories provides an opportunity for filling in some of the gaps in the written records and exploring new,

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unacknowledged areas of the revolution's history. In this regard, it must be noted that Cuban oral histories are not only substantial for what further information they reveal that complements the archival records; they are also valuable for the new insights and information they bring into the study of the Cuban revolution.

In Cuban studies, the commonly used approach of combining written and oral sources has been argued for by, among others, William LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh in their work on the history of diplomacy between Cuba and the United States; historian Michelle Chase on gender in the revolution; and Piero Gleijeses on histories of the Cuban revolution in a global context. Their work also discusses the inter-dependence of oral histories and written records in comparison with Cuba's archival policies and the silence of the archives: it focuses on the ways in which the use of oral histories makes it possible to fill in the silences of the archives and official records and compensate for unilateral historiographies and policies that reflect the institutionalization of histories as official and established.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, oral histories that are intertwined with institutional voices allow for a well-rounded, multilayered inclusion of everyday experiences in the grand course of historical events. In addition to discussions on the limitations of archival sources, a new and emerging direction in Cuba scholarship is an emphasis on the significance of oral histories of the Cuban revolution, grounded in the value of individual, personal histories of how the revolution has been imagined, experienced, and performed in everyday life. Insights into individual histories add layers to records on historical episodes by including a human dimension in the histories of ideas, structures, power, and discourse.

By studying Catholicism in the Cuban revolution through voices in both the archives and oral histories, my research weaves together the history of the institution known as the Catholic Church in Cuba, including many of its offices, authorities, and representations of the Catholic Church's universal *magisterium*, and histories of Cuban Catholics of the revolutionary era as both individuals and a collective bound together by similarities in their subjective experience. This approach bridges institutional histories with the more individual, personal, and unestablished histories via a joint examination of archival sources and oral histories.

Histories of *lived religion*<sup>61</sup> provide a valuable perspective on the Catholic experiences in the revolution. The approach enables a reading emphasizing individual perspective on the intersections of Catholicism and the revolution, and it puts focus on the meaning-making processes and sense-making systems of Cuban Catholics in their attempts to navigate between these overlapping identities and spheres of life. A consciousness of lived experiences makes it possible to include humans in a history of the Church and the revolution: instead of focusing solely on institutions, hierarchies, and policies, this work seeks to incorporate the experiences and microhistories of individuals into the story of the Church—and ultimately approach the Church from a more diverse and multifaceted perspective than merely an institutional one. With lived religion, the histories of religion in the everyday experiences of the revolution become visible and woven into histories of both the Catholic Church and the Cuban revolution.

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60 Gleijeses 2002, 10; Chase 2015, 18; LeoGrande & Kornbluh 2015, 4.

61 Broadly, two lines have emerged in the study of lived religion: one emphasizing historical areas of research and other employing more sociological perspectives to religion. For discussions on the disciplinary nature of lived religion by sociology, see Neitz 2011; Edgell 2012; Ammerman 2016.

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The predominant roots of lived religion are in historical scholarship: the field has encompassed, for instance, histories of religious practices, life and experience of the laity, and groups in some sense marginal from established histories. Some of these links also point towards the close connection of lived religion with the study of social histories.<sup>62</sup> A particular emphasis of the approach is on the examination of religion embedded in the everyday: grassroots experiences and expressions, quotidian religion, and daily course of religious meaning-making. For studying lived religion in history, the wide range of available sources includes interviews, analyses of documents and archives, and data collected by the use of ethnographic approaches.

In this study, I acknowledge and analyze Cuban Catholics' individual religious meaning-making in their daily lives, the dimensions of religion and the Church present in the course of everyday experiences within the framework of the revolution. While I consider it crucial to include the aspect of lived religion in this study, the attention to histories of lived religion does not lead to neglecting the more institutional histories. When the history of religion is approached from the perspective of lived religion, it is seen and examined as a history of "institutions *and* persons, texts *and* rituals, practice *and* theology, things *and* ideas."<sup>63</sup> Crossing such binaries as official and unofficial, established and marginal, authoritative and alternative opens up new opportunities to deepen the study of lived religion not as religion outside institutions but as also existing within and in constant interaction with the more institutionalized forms of religious expression.

Lived religion recognizes religion as religion-in-action, religion as an exchange between people and in and through relationships: not as something that merely *is* but as something actively experienced, practiced, processed, and lived. It therefore always includes the presence of social agents and actors as narrators of the experience themselves in the context in which they live: the same people experiencing the religion also interpret and make sense of it in the individual, daily realities from which religion cannot be separated. The study of lived religion acknowledges religion as an element embedded in and intertwined with all human life, ranging from other cultural structures to discourse to any practices of daily life.<sup>64</sup> In the case of my research, I situate the lived experiences of Cuban Catholics within the broader political, social, and socio-emotional context of the revolution. I acknowledge Catholicism as one of the intertwining ideas in the revolution, and I direct my attention specifically to histories of Catholic experiences in the revolution.

As I direct my scholarly lens to observing the Catholic Church in Cuba from the perspective of how it has strived to make sense of and construct meanings for its own life, this study locates itself at the junction of public and private, political and domestic, the collective and intimate of Cuban revolutionary reality. Moments of upheaval, transition, and change provide a ground from which lived religion, religious meaning-making, and practices in everyday experience become exigent. In those moments, religion emerges at the intersections of inner experience and the outer world.<sup>65</sup> In the Cuban context, my research is anchored in a time when uncertainty, conflict, and confrontation were decisive factors of religious life in

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62 Hall 1997, xi.

63 Orsi 2003, 172.

64 Orsi 2003, 172–173; Orsi 2010, xxxix–xlii.

65 Orsi 2003, 173; Orsi 2010, xl–xli.

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Cuba. Institutionally, the Church in Cuba witnessed the waves of change in global Catholicism. At the same time, the Church was under pressure from and coming into conflict with the revolution. Simultaneously and interlaced with the above-mentioned phenomena, the Cuban revolutionary reality was in a stage of uncertain transitions in politics, economy, social life, and culture. Catholics, whether in the ordained ministry or laity, lived within these realities of change, disturbance, and emotional conflict in their everyday lives.

From this perspective, it is clearly not enough to focus on institutional histories of the Catholic Church in Cuba's revolution as a means of fully understanding the interplay between the Church and the revolution, the experiences of Catholics in the revolution, and the meanings given to these histories by the Church. While a focus on the figures of ecclesial authority, the clergy, representative bodies, and offices of the Church illustrates the official positions and discourses of the Catholic Church, it renders less, if any, agency, particularly if read from and through archival sources, to the lives and experiences of Cuban Catholic laypeople in their everyday life at the grassroots level of the revolution. Neither does it offer sufficient explanations for *why* the patterns of human reactions and emotions unfolded in the way they did.

In order to analyze these aspects, one must pay attention to the daily experience of people, to the people who lived not only in between the Church and the revolution, but also within *both* the Church and the revolution as simultaneously existing, overlapping realities of life. It is at just such an intersection that the theological formulations, emotional and spiritual responses, and socio-political positions assumed by the Church as an institution and the Catholic community as a cohort of individuals become visible in the revolutionary context and contribute to an understanding of the historical experience of Catholicism in the revolution, as narrated by the myriad of voices within the Church.

A particular emphasis of this study lies in the experiences of Cuban Catholics living through the revolution as laypeople. As is the case in this study as well, the histories of lived experiences are personal, even intimate at times, and they touch upon not only the intellectual but also the emotional and intersubjective aspects of individual life. The lived religion approach can be thus used in historical research to open up new perspectives for understanding an individual's experiences, roles, and performances in historical situations of the everyday. In Cuban studies, a similar approach has been employed by, for instance, Luis Pérez in discussing Cuban historiography for the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, focus on the everyday of the revolution remains a still-emerging area in Cuban studies.

In this work, I explore the approach of lived religion primarily by examining Catholic lived experiences and lay agency at the junction of the institutional church and its teachings and the revolution's claim for supreme authority in social life. In more detail, I focus on the voices recounting emotional histories, daily experiences of Catholic life in the revolution, ideological and moral conflicts, and relations between laypeople and the clergy. In order to acknowledge "the imperative of charting the practices of the laity,"<sup>67</sup> while still remaining conscious of the

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66 Pérez writes: "Among the deficiencies of the historiography is the absence of attention to the quotidian, of daily life as lived, and how meeting the needs of everyday life acted in the aggregate to produce the circumstances that shaped the people Cubans have become." Pérez 2015b.

67 Hall 1997, xii.

risk that “this imperative can evolve into an overemphasis on [lay] agency,”<sup>68</sup> I strive for a balanced account of the histories of the Church as an institution with histories of lay agency.

While including voices of lived religion into this study, I also acknowledge the many aspects of lived religion left outside the story: the practices of worship and service, with local variations and specific devotional practices that are manifested, for instance, in expressions other than those relating directly to the revolution. This relatedness to revolutionary discourse has been the primary criterion for deciding which aspects to focus on and which microhistories to include in the grand narrative analyzed in this study. Hence, this study also serves as an opening to future contributions required for an in-depth understanding of the multilayered dynamics of Catholicism as a religious practice within the revolution.

## 6. Studies of the Revolution and Cuban Catholicism

### 6.1. New Histories of the Revolution

Cuban studies, sometimes also called Cubanology,<sup>69</sup> refers to the multi- and interdisciplinary scholarly study of Cuba.<sup>70</sup> It is an academic field focusing on the study of Cuba and its diaspora, from a temporal standpoint situated in both pre- and post-revolutionary eras. It is a title encompassing numerous different academic disciplines, methodologies, and ideologies. The global center of Cuban studies is the United States, where several institutions, centers, and publishers operate as particular sites specializing in Cuban studies. Considering its history with Cuba, the United States is also historically the leading producer of scholarly knowledge on Cuba outside the island.<sup>71</sup>

Since histories of the complex, multilayered, and still-evolving Cuba–U.S. relations are inextricably histories of the revolution, they are also histories of the construction of scholarly historiographies for studying the revolution. In Cuban studies, political and politicized discourse has contributed to the approaches and paradigms for examining the revolution, and political directions continue to impact the way Cuba’s past is constructed in the present. In addition to the production of history in Cuba through the officially established discourse on the past, frameworks of public recollection, and the silence of the archives, scholars of the revolution have also had to navigate the politicized discourse when studying the revolution. In both Cuba and the United States, the intertwining histories of the two countries and their peoples have contributed to a myriad of paradigmatic binaries and frameworks of discourse anchored in the Cold War and the still-evolving politics across the Florida Strait.<sup>72</sup>

Questions about partiality and scholarly biases in academic studies of Cuba have been raised repeatedly, as the study of the revolution often addresses topics sensitive for both the academic community and the general public in their politically and emotionally charged

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68 Hall 1997, xii.

69 Cubanology as a field of study and Cubanologists as the scholars in the field are terms derived from the studies of the Soviet system, such as Kremlinology, and historically used primarily by Cuban scholars and foreign scholars with Marxist or leftist positions. As such, according to Mesa-Lago, the term often includes a critical approach to the American mainstream Cuban studies. Mesa-Lago 1992; Bustamante & Lambe 2019.

70 Fernández 1992, 3; Mesa-Lago 1992, 9–10.

71 Mesa-Lago 1992, 9–14.

72 For historiographical remarks on Cuban studies and its political nature, see Pérez 1985; Pérez–Stable 1991; Fernández 1992; Guerra 2012; Mesa-Lago 1992, 11–12; Chase 2015; Bustamante & Lambe 2019.



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discourses.<sup>73</sup> Scholars have called on the field to engage in critical self-reflection and analysis of both past and prevailing paradigms, approaches, and methodology when studying the revolution. Already in the early 1990s, scholars issued a critique against stagnation and the imposing of Western historical concepts and experiences when analyzing the Cuban revolution and demanded that more attention be given to the Cuban context and discourse on the revolution.<sup>74</sup> These claims have surfaced repeatedly in contemporary Cuban studies, with a renewed focus on redirecting the scholarly lens towards the island and Cuban voices narrating the revolutionary process.

Regarding the approaches and methods to analyzing the histories of the revolution in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, traditionalist approaches still largely dominated the field. The revolution has been analyzed through the lenses of political and diplomatic history, focusing on the high-level and top-down histories of the revolution. This has placed predominant attention on the vanguard of the Cuban revolution and their influence on the revolutionary process. Fidel Castro has remained a central figure of scholarly interest, and the revolution's history has often been recounted through Castro's personality and performance. This has led, until recently, to the neglect of more complex perspectives, such as dynamics of gender, race, and the non-governmental sector within revolutionary society, and it has contributed to reinforcing the revolution's grand narrative.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, the focus on the Cuban revolution from the perspective of North-American histories of foreign relations, policies, and dynamics of power has occurred at the cost of histories of the revolution from within. Social histories, histories in the margins of the revolutionary paradigm, histories focusing on Cuba's hemispheric and cultural connections to Latin America, and histories of the ideas, cultures and exchanges stemming from the island have been given less attention. Even when the lens of scholarly focus has been directed at Cuba, academic interest in the grand narrative of the revolution has come at the cost of a lack of interest in other voices that present more complex and multifaceted histories of the revolutionary experience.<sup>76</sup>

The history of the revolution has been predominantly observed as a history of ideas and institutions. The people behind and within the institutions, the great mass of individuals, have been the subject of less scholarly attention. Scholarly contributions focusing on the top-down histories of the revolution have strengthened the narratives of supreme leadership and the masses' unyielding support, thus reinforcing the revolution's self-appointed narrative frameworks of overwhelming popularity and popular consensus. For a long time, both public interest and scholarly contributions predominantly focused on the heroic history of the revolution. In the heroic histories, the story of the revolution's origins was repeatedly recounted through the histories of the revolutionary guerrilla war. The dominant emphasis of this narrative has suppressed other actors and narratives of the revolution; such alternate, erased histories

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73 For discussions concerning the multiplicity of scholarly perspectives on Cuban studies, the historiography of the discipline, and the politicized discourse within the field, see Pérez-Stable 1991; Fernández 1992, 3; Mesa-Lago 1992, 25.

74 For instance, Pérez-Stable 1991.

75 Pérez-Stable 1991; Pérez 1992, 54; Valdés 2008, 27–28.

76 For discussions on the revolutionary historiography, the subversion of established scholarly binaries, and the revision of official paradigms, see Guerra 2012; Chase 2015; Bustamante & Lambe 2019.

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include, for instance, the role of civic resistance, the urban underground, and the participation of middle-class Cuban Catholics in the revolutionary process.<sup>77</sup>

Criticism of the focus on political history and top-down histories of the revolution has increasingly been voiced once again since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Cuban studies. In recent years, numerous scholars and emerging topics of research have contributed to a conscious shift in the field. With respect to Cuban studies in the United States, this can be seen in the shift away from the legacies of the Cold War era in studying the history of Cuba, and the increasingly critical awareness of the binaries and dichotomies represented in and constructed by scholarly work as well. Following the diplomatic rapprochement of Cuba and the United States in 2014, scholars in the field have begun to take steps towards redefining the discipline's role and position. At times, this has been called the "normalization of Cuban studies," referring to a shift away from perspectives on Cuba rooted in the Cold War presuppositions and alignments, seeking new perspectives that allow for a more well-rounded examination of Cuba's revolutionary past and present also in relation to the United States.

In the normalization of Cuban studies, what still needs to be addressed more is the interdisciplinary, global exchange between scholars. With the United States as the predominant region for Cuban studies, European studies on Cuba have taken significant steps towards gaining more cohesion, demonstrating an awareness of and participating in the global field. Several European universities host research projects, units with a focus on Cuba, and individual scholars studying the Cuban revolution. In this exchange of knowledge, premises for research and scholarship, and approaches, it is essential to ask what the intertwining traditions may contribute to the future of Cuban studies as a global field developed by multiple generations of scholars from a broad variety of disciplinary, cultural, and geographical backgrounds. In the changing landscape of Cuba's revolution, the field of studies on the revolution must strive for a balanced, multifaceted discourse by merging and comparing Cuban, American, and European perspectives while acknowledging each voice with its distinct tones contributing to the further evolving study of the elusive ideas of the Cuban revolution.

In recent years, the aim of the emerging new studies in the field has been to shift the focus of scholarship from polarization to the deconstruction of binaries and perspectives on the Cuban revolution while taking more critical distance from politicized experiences and interpretations. The effort to generate a shift has raised certain questions. What does scholarly study of Cuba look like in the post-Cold War era? What are the epistemological and methodological frameworks for Cuban studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How will the evolving episodes in Cuba–U.S. relations affect the scholarly field? These questions have been asked by a growing number of scholars in numerous academic discourses<sup>78</sup> after the landmark moment of December 2014.

In recent years, a shift occurring among the emerging generation of Cuba scholars has diverted perspectives towards previously unexplored histories of the revolution, such as Cuban social histories, lived experience, meaning-making, and the daily course of life in the revolution. These new histories of the revolution seek to look beyond the established

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77 Chase 2015, 5–6, 211–212.

78 Recent fora for discourse on the evolving nature of Cuban studies include, for instance, Cuban Revolution at 60, Conference at New York University in 2019; Latin American Studies Association (LASA), Annual Meeting 2018; New Directions in Cuban Studies Conference by University of Miami in 2016; Exploring Change in Cuba Conference in Paris in 2015.

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historiographical framework that focuses on institutional perspectives that often offer a systematic, linear narrative of the revolutionary process. Although the historiography and predominant archival policies of the revolution do not fully provide for an in-depth study based on primary sources, the emerging amount of attention given to these new histories suggests that not only is there interest in new perspectives on the revolution, but scholars have also found ways to approach these new histories either with new sources or new takes on old sources.

A particularly vibrant new direction in the scholarly study of Cuba is the shift of perspective when studying the revolution's history: studying the revolution not in a top-down manner, but rather "from within."<sup>79</sup> In studies of the history of the Cuban revolution, this has meant the emergence of several scholarly contributions with a focus on the previously untold, unstudied histories of the revolution. What these recent studies share is a focus on the revolution's past as a messy, multifaceted, complex history. By acknowledging the existing binaries and dichotomies both in the revolution and in the study of it, they respond to the challenge of telling the history of the revolution as a history, or even histories, of complex narratives, dynamic struggles, and shifting balances of power and participation. This enriches and challenges the narratives of simplistic, top-down histories of the revolution as mere histories of politics and diplomacy.

The new histories call for devoting more attention to the complexity of the revolutionary process and its "many forgotten actors,"<sup>80</sup> as well as to the "the everyday cultural practices, lifeways, and beliefs of ordinary Cubans—in short, the social universe beyond official politicization."<sup>81</sup> As such, they discuss the current dynamics of Cuban studies by highlighting future opportunities and challenges to further advancing the scholarly analysis of the revolution. Particular emphasis has been put on the need for more individual histories of the revolution. In order to complement and challenge the dominant perspectives of institutional histories, and to broaden the concept of the revolution from a top-down process to a more inclusive and creative movement driven by grassroots activism, the inclusion of histories of individuals and personal stories adds a much-needed human dimension to the Cuban revolution.

New directions in the study of the revolution's history look at individual histories and grassroots experiences of living the revolution. In order to analyze the revolution from new perspectives, scholars must either find new sources or examine old sources from a new perspective. There is a growing need for listening to individual stories of the revolution; personal histories illustrate human experience in the revolution, and individual stories also construct histories of the revolution. Emerging scholarly contributions recognize an individual's experiences as part of the revolution's messy histories rather than focus on the institutionally constructed versions of the revolution's past. Through this approach, people become visible both behind and within, as intertwined in, and as inseparable from the histories of the revolution. These stories make the revolution come to life. By including the human dimension, individual stories, and firsthand accounts of daily life, these studies open new windows into examining how lives have been led and meanings made in revolutionary Cuba by real, present individuals not only during the course of the revolution but in the course of their own lives.

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79 Guerra 2012, 4; Bustamante & Lambe 2019; de la Fuente 2019.

80 Chase 2015, 212; de la Fuente 2019, 296.

81 Bustamante & Lambe 2019, 20; de la Fuente 2019, 296.

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The new directions in Cuban studies raise an important question: For Cuban studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, what are currently the unexplored topics, lacunas in knowledge, and understudied areas of the Cuban revolution? These questions also have epistemological meanings as they mirror the production of visions and paradigms on the Cuban revolution constructed by academic discourse and scholarly approaches to the revolution.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, they encourage scholars to consciously approach the non-topics and, thus far, silenced, invisible, non-paradigmatic dimensions of the revolution: to critically assess what is constructed as “the reality” of the revolution in and by scholarly work.

### 6.2. Scholarship on Catholicism and the Revolution

As my research proposes, the emerging new realities in Cuban studies also include a new-found awareness of the multifaceted presence and role of religion in the revolution. Considering the lack of scholarly attention devoted to religion in Cuba, I argue that it is essential to reconsider both religion’s role in Cuban studies and the scholarly lens through which the relations of religion and the revolution are examined. In studying the revolution, scholarly statements construct reality and impose normativity; academic study exercises power over what is acknowledged by inclusion and what is ignored by exclusion in historical knowledge produced by scholarly narratives.<sup>83</sup> Scholarly premises regarding knowledge of the revolution have typically underrepresented and understudied the role of religion in the revolution.<sup>84</sup>

In the course of scholarship on the revolution, revolutionary paradigms of history and historiography have directed scholarly approaches to determining the scope and context of studying the revolution. Consequently, the process of employing the revolution’s paradigmatic presupposition about religion has further reinforced the exclusion of religion from the accounts of revolutionary histories. In preceding scholarly work, religion has not been analyzed in depth as a category of identity, experience, and expression embedded in the revolution; religion, and religious agency, have been placed in the margin of the revolution’s history and examined through a perception of otherness. As a result, religious meaning-making of the revolution has been unacknowledged and unaccounted for. In my research, these histories are both reconstructed and reconsidered.

Scholarly accounts of the histories of Catholicism in the revolution remain few.<sup>85</sup> The first of them were produced in the 1970s, as historian Margaret Crahan published numerous pieces outlining the position of the Church in the revolution. Her work emerged as a pioneering contribution to the study of Catholicism in the revolution: spanning the years from the 1970s to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, titles such as *Salvation through Christ or Marx: Religion in*

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82 For a theoretical discussion on the nature of scholarly construction of historical narratives with primary sources, see Farge 2013, 94–101.

83 The production of historical knowledge in Cuban studies is discussed by, among other, Fernández 1992.

84 In regard to Catholicism in the Cuban revolution, the lack of scholarly attention has been acknowledged and criticized by, for example, John C. Super. Pointing out the lack of scholarly interest in religion in the revolution, Super claims that “perhaps the most telling evidence is that some otherwise very good studies of Cuba by established scholars completely ignore or barely mention the Church.” Super 2003.

85 For a discussion on the perspectives on Catholicism in the revolution in scholarship, see Super 2003. John C. Super offers a coherent critique on the imposed and established narratives on institutional Catholicism, on the social impact of the Catholic Church in Cuba, and paradigmatic scholarly presuppositions on the role of religion in the revolution.

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*Revolutionary Cuba*,<sup>86</sup> *Cuba: Religion and Revolutionary Institutionalization*,<sup>87</sup> *Catholicism in Cuba*,<sup>88</sup> and *Fidel Castro, the Catholic Church and Revolution in Cuba*<sup>89</sup> have laid the groundwork for studying Catholicism in the revolution. Crahan's work has contributed remarkably to establishing the conceptual framework through which the interplay of Christianity and the revolution has been analyzed. In her later work,<sup>90</sup> Crahan situates religion as an agent and a subject of the contemporary civic sphere in the revolution, and in *The Church and Revolution: Cuba and Nicaragua*<sup>91</sup> she draws a comparison between Catholicism and the revolutions in Cuba and Nicaragua.

The focus of these studies has been on institutional Catholicism, the Catholic Church as an administrative entity, and Catholics as a cohesive social group in Cuba. Considering Crahan's preeminent contributions to the study of religion in Cuban studies, it is remarkable that the large corpus of Crahan's work on Catholicism in the revolution stemmed only from the use of documental sources, such as official publications of the Catholic Church in Cuba, and interviews with Cuban Catholics. Archival sources were not included in the studies, as the silence of the archives has endured throughout the years of Crahan's contribution to the field. Simultaneously, Crahan's extensive and foundational work on what has been available for scholarly study also explains why little has been produced in the field otherwise.

Apart from Crahan's work, Catholicism in the revolution was addressed in the 1980s by only a few scholars. In 1989, John M. Kirk published a monograph entitled *Between God and the Party. Religion and Politics in Revolutionary Cuba*,<sup>92</sup> which examines Cuban Church–State relations primarily within the scope of politics and the revolutionary process. To date, Kirk's work remains one of the few monographs focusing on the institutional Catholic Church in the revolution. Similarly to Crahan, Kirk's research also draws predominantly on published ecclesial documents and interviews; the silence of the archives determined the conditions for research when Kirk, too, conducted his research.

In Cuba, historian Aurelio Alonso Tejada published his well-known monograph *Church and Politics in Revolutionary Cuba* in 1999.<sup>93</sup> Archival sources used for this study suggest that Alonso Tejada discussed his work on the histories of Catholicism with representatives of the Cuban government and that he provided the government with historicized information of ecclesial life on the island.<sup>94</sup> Thus, Alonso Tejada's work represents a unique contribution to the history of the Catholic Church in the revolutionary era on the island, as most of the Cuban works of Catholicism tend to conclude with the year 1959.<sup>95</sup> In the few accounts of the ecclesial history of the revolution, the scope of the studies has been mostly of a chronological nature.<sup>96</sup>

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86 Crahan 1979.

87 Crahan 1985.

88 Crahan 1989.

89 Crahan 1990.

90 Crahan 2007; Crahan 2008.

91 Crahan 1987.

92 Kirk 1989.

93 Alonso Tejada 1999. I refer to the English translation of Alonso Tejada's monograph as it is the edition I reference in the forthcoming chapters. Originally the work was published in Cuba in Spanish, under the title *Iglesia y política en Cuba revolucionaria*.

94 The archival sources of MINREX include numerous documents referring to Alonso Tejada's presentations on Catholicism as well as copies of the actual speeches delivered by Alonso Tejada to MINREX officials.

95 For Cuban literature on pre-revolutionary Catholicism, see Torres-Cuevas 2008; Segre Ricardo 2010.

96 For a chronology of the Catholic Church in Cuba, see Polcari Suárez 2003.

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In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, even fewer studies have focused on Catholicism in the revolution. With the prevailing silence of the archives and the scholarly contributions of the preceding decades still holding their ground as relevant and valid perspectives, it has seemed that little has been left to study. One of the few exceptions has been John C. Super's discussion of the topic under the title *Interpretations of Church and State in Cuba, 1959–1961*, published in 2013.<sup>97</sup> With respect to the Catholic Church in Cuba, a well-known piece of more recent theological scholarship on the island is a doctoral dissertation by Rolando Cabrera García, entitled *Artífices de Reconciliación: El Ser y la Misión del Laico en el Magisterio y en la Praxis de la Iglesia en Cuba (1969–2000)*.<sup>98</sup>

Among the most recent scholarly work on religion in Cuba is Jalane D. Schmidt's study *Cachita's Streets. The Virgin of Charity, Race & Revolution in Cuba*.<sup>99</sup> In her work, Schmidt analyzes the politics and performance linked to the Virgin of Charity as a Cuban symbol of national identity and patriotism, particularly vital from the perspective of race. Methodologically, Schmidt incorporates more traditional approaches of historical research with ethnographic approaches, such as interviews and observation, in order to draw a cohesive, fuller picture of phenomena that is relevant not only as history but still present as well, and she touches upon institutions as well as communities and individuals. Drawing from archival and oral sources, Schmidt traces the history of the Virgin as an object of grassroots religiosity from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.<sup>100</sup>

Related to Schmidt's work is a more theological approach to Cuban Catholic religiosity and spirituality outlined by Michelle A. Gonzalez, which compares Cuban American and African American religiosity.<sup>101</sup> Alongside Gonzalez, other scholars have discussed the religiosity of Cuban Catholics in the United States through the diaspora experience.<sup>102</sup> While monographs dedicated to the scholarly study of the Church in the revolution remain few, a number of publications focusing on other aspects of the Cuban revolution include Catholicism in the larger framework of scholarly analysis. In her monograph *Political Disaffection in Cuba's Revolution and Exodus*,<sup>103</sup> sociologist Silvia Pedraza examines the role of Catholicism and Catholic faith as perceived by Cubans outside the island as an element of their experience of exodus. A similar role is assigned to the Catholic Church in Yvonne Conde's *Operation Peter Pan. The Untold Exodus of 14,048 Cuban Children*.<sup>104</sup> Catholicism has also been acknowledged in works focusing on the cultural and socio-political dimensions of the revolution; in such cases, the secondary focus on Catholicism has been through the perspectives of class, ethnicity, race, and gender in revolutionary politics and socio-political discourse in revolutionary society.<sup>105</sup>

A common theme in preceding scholarly work is the focus on institutional narratives and histories of Catholicism, arising from both the Church as an authoritative institution and the revolution as a provider of established historiography. Simple dichotomies and depictions of

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97 Super 2003.

98 Cabrera García 2003.

99 Schmidt 2015.

100 Schmidt 2015, 5–7.

101 Gonzalez 2006.

102 See, for instance, Tweed 1997; De La Torre 2003.

103 Pedraza 2007.

104 Conde 1999.

105 See Padula & Smith 1985 & 1996; de la Fuente 2001; Sweig 2002; Chase 2015; Benson 2016.

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Catholicism through ecclesial hierarchy, clergy, and the institutional alienation of the Church from the people have dominated the landscapes of Catholics in scholarly work on Cuba. The institutional focus has become particularly visible in the ways “the Church” has been placed on the opposite side of “the people,” without further discussing the intrinsically interconnected nature of ecclesial institutions and practitioners of faith within Cuban culture, society, and people in the revolutionary period. Given the silence of the archives, Cuba scholars have not accessed primary documentation that would have enabled them to include the Church’s own discourse on the topic and perspectives derived from various theological, ecclesial, or political voices within the Church. Much of the preceding scholarly work has approached Church–State relations in the revolution from presuppositions of conflict and confrontation, paying no attention to an intra-ecclesial discourse challenging simple binaries and dichotomies of the Church existing in opposition to and in the margins of the revolution.

My research both complements and challenges these perspectives by placing an emphasis on voices from the grassroots level: bottom-up processes and interpretations of Catholicism in the revolution, which do not always concur with and align with more institutional narratives. Another paradigm challenged by this study is the emphasis on the revolution’s policies and actions taken towards Catholicism and, consequently, the development of Church–State relations in revolutionary Cuba as directed by the Cuban government and State as top-down processes. In this study, voices from within the Catholic Church and the experiences of Cuban Catholics offer more nuanced interpretations of the dynamics and discourse of religion and the revolution. Ultimately, this study argues that the intertwining histories of the revolutionary reality warrant more critical perspectives that acknowledge the complex, multifaceted interactions of religion and the revolution.

Considering the complexity of Catholicism in the Cuban revolution, it is striking how little scholarly knowledge has been produced on the topic. Apart from silences in Cuban studies, the silence of scholarship on Cuban Catholicism reigns supreme in studies of Catholic theology and Church history. The history of the Cuban Church has not been written into the study of *Ostpolitik*, the Holy See’s diplomatic approach to Communist regimes. In works on the Holy See’s diplomacy with Communist regimes, histories of Latin American Catholicism, and consequently, Cuba are rarely placed on the map;<sup>106</sup> most of the scholarly work is anchored in the European context, in which Cuba only occasionally surfaces as a point of reference or is mentioned in passing, while detailed analysis focuses on Eastern European Catholicism.<sup>107</sup> In the fields of theology and ecclesial history, my study addresses this geographical, cultural, and political underrepresentation, which warrants more critical analysis.

## 7. Contextualization and Chapter Overview

In the histories of Catholicism in the Cuban revolution, overarching themes of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century come together. Histories of the Cuban Church are situated within the contexts

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<sup>106</sup> Among the recent studies on Latin American Catholicism is the work by Maria Clara Bingemer (2016). Bingemer places Cuba on the map of global Catholicism through liberation theology and its link with the Cuban revolution and Marxist ideology. As shown in the forthcoming chapters of this study, the argument is somewhat controversial from a Cuban perspective and emblematic of the proposed revolutionary historiography regarding the role of religion in the revolution. For further reference, see Bingemer 2016, 27.

<sup>107</sup> See, for instance, Melloni 2006; Barberini 2007.

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of the Cuban revolution and the Cold War; yet simultaneously, they pertain to histories of modern Catholicism, Catholic encounters with communism, and theological realignments of global Catholicism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Cuban case both derives from and is reflected in all these historical markers and landmark episodes.

As my research shows, histories of Cuban Catholicism pertain to a broader field of historic processes and phenomena. Yet in studies of contemporary Catholicism, Cuba rarely surfaces. Studies focusing on the Catholicism and communism, the Holy See and diplomacy, *Ostpolitik*, and Latin American and Caribbean church history seldom include Cuba in their stories. Yet, as I discuss further in the concluding section of this dissertation, the case of Cuba intersects with all of these dimensions of Catholic historiography and fields of scholarly work approaching Cuban Catholicism. While Cuba must be placed into dialogue with all of them, none of them suffices to excavate the Cuban Catholic experience in the revolution.

In a similar manner, the complexity of the Cuban revolution and the scholarly study of it show that the history of the revolution cannot be reduced to explanations provided by singular perspectives on Cuba in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Diplomacy, foreign policy, economics, and international relations open essential perspectives, but they do little to deconstruct the long history of accounting for Cuba's past through the histories of the other. Correspondingly, on the island the histories of the revolution cannot not be satisfactorily explained as histories of institutions or individuals alone; nor do they cover the full scale of the revolution if looked at only from the perspective of either the power exercised by the State or the categories of resistance to the State. Neither the accounts on the island nor those among the communities of Cuban exiles tell the whole story of Cuban identity in the revolution; claims of truth about the revolution are not the sole preserve of either side of the Florida Straits, nor do they belong to single pieces of scholarly work. The stories of the Cuban revolution are more complex and warrant more attention for the many messy, uneasy histories.

Therefore, my research both builds on and makes the argument that the case of Cuban Catholicism must be studied primarily in its *Cuban* context with its intertwining layers and complexities. None of the perspectives from global Catholicism or histories of the revolution suffice to answer the persistent, yet elusive, questions of Catholic experiences in the revolutionary reality. In order to access the experiences of those on the island who lived through the revolution, the case of the Catholic Church in Cuba must be studied primarily in its Cuban context with predominantly Cuban voices. Furthermore, in-depth analysis of ecclesial histories of the revolution underscores the importance of directing scholarly attention at the voices historicizing the revolutionary experience from within. The history of the revolution is not recounted the same way in Cuba as it is in the United States, or in Africa or Europe. The historical accounts of the revolution in the United States, African or European countries are not uniform nor do they completely overlap with Cuban historiography. In Cuba as well, multiple interpretations exist of the history of the revolution. Despite official and establishes narratives, voices emerging from within the Cuban reality of life suggest that the stories of the revolution are not phrased in synchronized tones on the island.

As I anchor my research in the Cuban context, Catholicism, and the revolution as they were experienced and discussed on the island, I am aware of the several profoundly significant threads which I do not discuss in this dissertation. Despite the inarguable influence of Cuban Catholicism in the United States, the scope of this work does not include the experiences of



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exile and the diaspora of Cuban Catholics as discussed outside the island. Following these parameters, with the voices emerging from Cuban primary sources located on the island as the predominant factor for inclusion and exclusion, many of the historical events with remarkable significance for the Cuban-American experience are not discussed in the scope of this study. If they are excluded, it is for the reason that there were no sources available in Cuba or that the topics are considered to pertain primarily to discourse not arising directly from the internal reality of the Church in Cuba. If they are included in the overarching narrative of this study, it is by the use of sources located on the island and to provide a complementary perspective to scholarly discourse or the established paradigms from within the revolutionary reality.

In a similar manner, discourse on global Catholicism, such as the Holy See in Cuba, is always initiated by Cuban voices. By framing the dissertation in this way, the research allows me to recover and excavate previously unacknowledged perspectives on both Cuban and global discourses on Catholicism and the revolution. Other topics not discussed include *santería*, and the connection of Afro-Cuban religiosity to Catholicism. The only occasions in which the close-relatedly, overlapping spiritual tradition is addressed is when the sources explicitly discuss *religiosidad popular* in the context of the revolution.

Closely connecting to the multiple, intertwining contexts in which this study is located, critical remarks on terminology reveal deeper currents in the perspectives and conceptualizations of both Catholicism and the Cuban revolution. In this study, I follow Cuba scholars' convention of using "revolution" as an umbrella term to encompass the multitude of political, social, and cultural processes that have taken place in Cuba since 1959, while also remaining conscious of the elusive, interpretative meanings and uses of the term.<sup>108</sup> The word revolution is not capitalized as per usual in international scholarship, even though in Cuba the word Revolution is capitalized, accentuated correspondingly in speech, and understood as an ongoing process initiated by *el Triunfo de la Revolución* (the triumph of the Revolution), or *cuando triunfó la Revolución* (when the Revolution triumphed), in January 1959.<sup>109</sup> As a reference to the machinery of the revolution, terms such as "revolutionary government" and "revolutionary regime," consisting of "revolutionaries" and "militants," are generally referred to in international scholarship<sup>110</sup> as agents of "the revolutionary project," "revolutionary process," and "revolutionary reality," all referring to the vision of the revolution portrayed by its leadership and experienced by people narrating histories of life in the revolution.

Equally elusive are the concepts that this study also accommodates as practical markers for addressing Catholicism. Likewise in religious terminology, "Catholicism" and "Catholics" are umbrella terms that encompass a myriad of interpretations, cultures, personalities, and identities. "Cuban Catholicism" is not an ahistorical monolith nor an established set of features in scholarly work; this study also strives to illustrate the fluidity in the intertwining ideas of *la cubanidad*<sup>111</sup>, Catholicism, and the revolution. While aware of the risk of using simplistic, uniform, and cohesive concepts that undermine the complexity of both Catholicism and the

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108 Hamilton 2012, 13; Bustamante & Lambe 2019, 24–25.

109 Hamilton 2012, 13.

110 See, for instance, Chase 2015.

111 *La cubanidad*, "Cubanness," refers to the self-identification of Cubans to the essential features of being Cuban. The term is often used in scholarly work: see Tweed 1997, 29; De La Torre 2003, 16; Thomas-Woodard 2003.

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revolution and their dynamics of power and contestation between institutions and people, these terms serve as necessary markers on the roadmap: they help to illustrate the political and social processes that form the essential context of this study. Use of the terms “the revolution,” “the State,” “Catholicism,” and “the Church” as monolithic concepts serves to reinforce a pretext regarding the abstract loci of power and authority.

Yet both Catholic and revolutionary mechanisms and dynamics of power also consist of individuals with a focus on “you and me”<sup>112</sup> sustaining the concept of a state. Following this argument, my research suggests that “you and me” becomes the driving force also for conceptualizing Cuban Catholicism in the revolution. While terms such as “episcopate” and “episcopal hierarchy” are used in this study, they are also recognized as constructions of institutional origin that may be referred to as “bishops” to emphasize the human faces of the institution. Correspondingly, “clergy” and “laity” refer not only to the cohorts of the ecclesial ranks, but also to “priests” and “laypeople”—individuals with identities more multifaceted than any terms used in reference to them.

Some of those voices are recaptured and reconstructed in the chapters that follow. Chapter II sets the backdrop for this study by presenting brief outlines of the global political and Catholic contexts in which the Cuban revolution and ecclesial life take place and are mirrored against. By offering a summary of the course of the Cuban revolution and its grand foundations in ideology and historiography, the chapter leads towards the landmark year of 1959. As the first section drawing on Cuban primary sources, chapter III follows the Catholic discourse on receiving, discussing, and, ultimately, contesting the revolution. The chapter traces the voices of the episcopal hierarchy, clergy, and militant laity and the extent to which they are intertwined, yet also traces contrasting discourses on the participation of Catholics in the revolution. By the end of the chapter, religion and revolution become mutually exclusive, resulting in constructions of Catholicism in the revolution through a narrative of absence and silence via both the revolution’s historiographical narratives and scholarly paradigms from 1961 onwards.

Chapter IV thus moves into uncharted territories of the revolution. From 1962 to 1968, it focuses on both the internal discourses and life of Catholic communities within the daily conditions of social control imposed by the revolution. By means of a layered account of voices, the chapter analyzes the life of the Church in the revolution as experienced by both the clergy and laity. At the same time, the chapter reveals previously unexplored global ecclesial relations between Cuba and the world. These intertwining histories come together in the emerging and increasingly critical assessment of ecclesial life and work on the island, as mirrored against the changes taking place in global Catholicism. In chapter V, a deepening perspective on the everyday experiences of Catholics in the revolutionary reality provides for an analysis of the intertwining, shared spaces of religious and revolutionary Cubans. In this chapter, a particular focus on the years 1969–1978 gives rise to the emergence of lay voices and, consequently, provides frameworks for reflection from the standpoint of global Catholicism. The chapter traces the new generation of influential theologians and committed laypeople immersed in the grassroots reality of the Cuban everyday, pointing towards increased social participation.

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112 Bustamante 2019.

## I INTRODUCTION

As chapter VI then discusses, the preceding development results in a systemic reflection on ecclesial life and pastoral work on the island. A fundamental pathway pursued throughout the chapter is the extensive, candid discussion of the experiences of Catholics in the revolutionary society from 1979 to 1986, revealing the changes already taking place in the lived reality of Catholics in their daily lives. Voices of both the clergy and, most importantly, laity provide a striking display of religious life in the revolution. This unfolding discourse makes visible both shifts in the dynamics of power and the emergence of new voices in the ecclesial reality. When mirrored against the course of the revolutionary process, these discourses mark a new opening in Church–State relations, suggesting increasing exposure for religion in the revolutionary reality.

In order to emphasize the new historical knowledge produced by this research, and to engage in an exchange with existing scholarship, each of the chapters concludes with a discussion. In these sections, the overarching arguments of the chapter are summarized and mirrored against pre-existing scholarly work, enabling a reflection on both the historical knowledge and scholarly constructions of religion in the Cuban revolution. In the concluding chapter of the dissertation, chapter VII, these findings are then discussed from the perspective of both summarizing the accomplishments of this research and linking them to the broader body of works on religion and the Cuban revolution, also pointing to new openings in future scholarship.

## II THE COLD WAR, CATHOLICISM, AND THE CUBAN REVOLUTION, 1959–1986

### 1. The Revolution and the Cold War

#### *Cuba in the Cold War Context*

By the time Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba in January 1959, the settings of the global Cold War seemed steadfast. Although Castro's revolution stemmed from the Cuban national context, the Cold War came to mark the course of the revolution in its rivalries, tensions, and conflicts. Throughout this study, the Cold War climate formed a backdrop against which the Cuban revolution was mirrored both on the island and internationally.

The roots of the Cold War were in World War II. In the geographical ruins of postwar-Europe, the Soviet Union sought to stabilize its presence and influence; opposed to this, the United States refused to recognize the Soviet Union's position in Eastern Europe. Consequently, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a contest for power and authority in the vacuum of power witnessed in the 1940s as a result of the reshaping of geography, ideologies, and alliances after the war.<sup>1</sup> Factors contributing to the onset of the Cold War were simultaneously internal and external in both the United States and the Soviet Union. In the latter, the personality of Stalin met the country's postwar reconstruction, the search for security, and the importance of ideology for the nation's future development. In the United States, the fear of communism transformed into action boosted by a sense of global omnipotence in the economy and nuclear weaponry, further intensified by the ideal of self-determination and the United States as a global leader.<sup>2</sup>

The Cold War as a state of global polarization and competition both originated from and materialized in the contrasting aspirations of the United States and the Soviet Union. Washington DC, as the home of Western, liberal capitalism, and Moscow, the capital of communism, marked the opposites in political thought and cultures of dominance. However, it can be argued that the confrontation arose as a joint effort of both the United States and the Soviet Union: as both of them continuously weighed each other's intentions and responded accordingly, neither side was solely responsible for the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> The competition between the two superpowers included not only contrasting ideological foundations and aspirations, but also economic dominance, weaponry, the nuclear arms race, rivalries and relations through the allying countries of the two, foreign policy reflected on domestic politics, and the personalities of the individual leaders of the respective countries.<sup>4</sup> In his work on the Cold War, historian Ralph B. Levering remarks that the Cold War also "grew from the contrasting national traditions, political ideologies, and approaches to foreign policy—that is, different assumptions and ways of looking at the world—that created a vast chasm between Soviet and western leaders."<sup>5</sup>

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1 Gaddis 2000, 356–357, 360–361.

2 Gaddis 2000, 356–357, 360–361; Gaddis 2010, 21.

3 Gaddis 2000, 356–357, 360–361; Gaddis 2010, 21.

4 Gaddis 1997, 261; Brands 2010, 1–4; Gaddis 2010, 9–12.

5 Levering 2016, 17.

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For more than four decades, the United States and the Soviet Union maintained an ideological and geopolitical state of competition. Never directly engaging in armed conflict with each other, the two superpowers imposed a “long peace” over the world.<sup>6</sup> The Cold War was characterized by the shifting power struggle between the Eastern and Western hemispheres, the United States and the Soviet Union in particular. However, North America and Europe were not the only active agents in the process: the agency of South America, Africa, and Asia also contributed to the global setting.

In this context, Cuba may be observed as not only an intermediate object of the US–Soviet-dominated perspective but also as an autonomous actor among the many agents actively invested in the Cold War with independent aspirations and perspectives. As has been discussed by numerous scholars, Cuba’s role in the Cold War was distinctive for the way it challenged the Eurocentric premises of the Cold War and integrated Marxism to Latin American political and intellectual discourses.<sup>7</sup> Cuba became not only an object but also an active subject, both on the island and on foreign soil, in the shifting dynamics of power in the Cold War.<sup>8</sup> The primary global context for the rise of Castro and the course of the Cuban revolution in its later years was the state of tension and hostility between the United States and the Soviet Union, for whom Cuba, in turn, became a crucial issue in the Cold War. As one of the superpowers had long-standing historical relations with Cuba, and the other was quick to establish new relations with the revolutionary rule, Cuba became one of the focal points of the Cold War for the two countries shortly after Castro’s ascent to power.

The influence of the United States had marked the course of Cuban history even before the revolutionary period. Already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Cuban political, social, and economic life had been strongly marked by U.S. presence although Cuba remained a possession of colonial Spain. A vivid, mutual exchange of influences was exercised as individuals, artifacts, and cultural influences traveled both ways; in this manner, the presence of the United States shaped the national identity of Cubans.<sup>9</sup> From the United States, the Cold War entered Cuba already at its first stages in the 1940s as North American interests and presence strongly influenced Cuba’s internal affairs during the period of the second republic (1933–1958). Cuban economy, culture, and social life were tightly intertwined in U.S. influence and hegemony.<sup>10</sup>

In studies of the Cold War, such as the works by Piero Gleijeses and Hal Brands,<sup>11</sup> Castro’s role and politics in the Cold War have been seen as direct attacks and assaults on U.S. hegemony and the historically paternalistic relation of the United States towards Latin American countries, as experienced in Cuba already prior to the revolution.<sup>12</sup> The joint prerevolutionary past of Cuba and the United States contributed to the revolution’s vision of the United States, and the continuous U.S. influence set the ground for Castro to resent the western, imperialistic hegemony and, consequently, perceive paternalism in the attitudes of the American government towards Cuba. After he came to power in Cuba, the long history of

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6 Brands 2010, 1–2.

7 Gaddis 2010, 12–14; Brown 2013, 106.

8 Hatzky 2015, 6–7.

9 de la Fuente 2001, 10–11; Landau 2008, 41–44; LeoGrande & Kornbluh 2015, 8.

10 de la Fuente 2001, 10–11, 176.

11 Gleijeses 2002; Brands 2010.

12 Gleijeses 2002, 12; Brands 2010, 5.

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uneven power relations led to the revolutionary government connecting Cuba's past with the United States to the revolutionary ideology.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, in the Cold War, two opposing interpretations mirrored the development of the Cuba–U.S. relations. What Cuba saw as a war against U.S. imperialism, the United States fought as a war against communist terror. From Cuba's perspective, the Cold War proceeded in continuity with the country's long history with the United States: the historical experience of submission to the United States', and the long history of bilateral exchange of influences, was transformed to the dynamics of the Cold War.<sup>14</sup>

If the ever-looming presence of the United States marked Cuban history<sup>15</sup>, the same can be argued from the perspective of the United States. From the early 1960s on, Cuban communism represented to the United States a global threat materialized close to home—not least in the context of the rapidly growing Cuban community in the United States, their influential public opinion about the revolution, and the participation of exile Cubans in U.S.-supported anti-Castro activities. Located in the Western hemisphere, with an ideal strategic location and a notoriously influent relationship with the United States, the revolution by Castro was feared to inspire new revolutions in Central and South America, which historically fell under the hegemonic influence of the United States. In the Cold War mindset, the Cuban revolution did not only shake the balance of alliances between the West and the East; it also threatened the hegemony of the United States in the Americas.<sup>16</sup>

The United States placed Cuba in an economic embargo in the autumn of 1960, extending the scope of the embargo to prohibiting all trade in 1962. The embargo remained in place throughout the periods addressed in this study. In January 1961, the United States broke diplomatic relations with Cuba.<sup>17</sup> In the early years of the Cuban revolution and the stage of heightened tension in the Cold War, the most exemplary episode of the complex relations of Cuba and the United States was the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961. Reflecting both the difficult history of the two, and the U.S.-vision of Cold War in Cuba, the attempt to overthrow Castro resulted in the United States' first military defeat in Latin America. The CIA-operated invasion, whose troops consisted primarily of anti-Castro Cubans in the United States, became a groundbreaking symbolic victory for Castro in Cuba and an inspirational example of defying the hegemony of the United States for Latin America.<sup>18</sup>

The Bay of the Pigs was the culmination of the campaign of the United States to overthrow Castro's regime by employing espionage and counterrevolution. In the 1960s, the United States made numerous attempts of sabotage and assassination of Fidel Castro. Much of the work, as was the case for the Bay of Pigs, was coordinated by CIA and operated by Cuban anti-Castro exiles in the United States.<sup>19</sup> The aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuban domestic politics is discussed in chapter III. For the relations of Cuba and the United States, the

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13 Valenta 1990, 3–7; Landau 2008, 41–44; LeoGrande & Kornbluh 2015, 8.

14 As discussed in the introduction of this study, the complex historical relationship between Cuba and the United States offers one but not the only perspective onto the Cuban revolution and the critical study of the revolution's origins and dimensions.

15 Cottam 1994, 44–45. For a cultural history of the Cuba–United States connection and the emerging Cuban identity, see Pérez 1999.

16 Torres 2001, 54–55; Gleijeses 2002, 16.

17 Drachman 2002, 181, 206; Keller 2013, 133.

18 Gaddis 2005, 74, 76, 166.

19 Cottam 1994, 47; Brown 2013, 103–104.

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failure of the invasion and the victory gained by Cuba became a watershed moment. In the radicalization of the revolution that followed the attempt to overthrow Castro, the Cuban government approached the Soviet Union with unprecedented intensity. Castro declared the revolution communist, proclaiming Marxist-Leninism as the ideological foundation of the revolution.<sup>20</sup>

In the American-Soviet dynamics of the Cold War, also one of the most crucial episodes placed Cuba in the spotlight: the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. In a period of only a few weeks in the latter half of October 1962, the Cold War culminated in a crisis that brought the world to fear a real and close threat of a nuclear war. In the middle of the mounting tension and escalating conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union was Cuba: a neighbor of the former but a friend of the latter. In the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis may be seen as a historical singularity, as argued by Gaddis, in which all of the major areas of US-Soviet competition—ideology, economy, and foreign relations—came together in the case of Cuba.<sup>21</sup> While scholarship has analyzed the history of the missile crisis as a history of U.S.-Soviet relations, Cuba did play a significant role on its own. In global, transnational histories of the Cold War, the crisis was a watershed moment; in the history of Cuba, as seen from the island, it was an unprecedented moment of global attention. Fidel Castro's Cuba was in the middle of two superpowers facing off, and the role of Cuba was both a catalyst and a result of the confrontation. The crisis momentarily placed Cuba in the middle of the Cold War on a global scale.<sup>22</sup> At the same, the Cold War context in which the United States and the Soviet Union operated also directed the course of the Cuban revolution.

### *Soviet Presence in Cuba*

Closely related to the deterioration of Cuba's relationship with the United States were the relations established from Cuba to the Soviet Union. Although the Cold War placed Cuba in the middle of the U.S.-Soviet contest for power, Cuba's interest in the Soviet Union reached beyond the global antagonism as a bilateral relationship linking Cuba with the Socialist bloc. Bilateral relations with the Soviet Union provided Cuba with new trade opportunities and a way to resist U.S. hegemony. The cooperation included not only the advancement of mutually shared ideologies but concrete acts in Cuban domestic and foreign politics, economy, and culture.<sup>23</sup> However, in the first years of the revolution, Cuba's relations with the Soviet Union also built on improvisation, ideological comradeship, economic and military interests, and, at heart, the defense of the revolution. The reinforcement of socialism as the ideological basis of the Cuban government contributed to and emerged from the development in the bilateral relationship with the Soviet Union. According to Louis A. Pérez, "the revolutionary government was driven to adopt socialist structures by the logic of its reform agenda."<sup>24</sup>

From the 1960s through the 1980s, Cuba received economic support and subsidies from the Soviet Union. The economic relations consisted of both trade and aid to Cuba from the Soviet Union. Consequently, Cuba's crisis with the United States and its economic

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20 Gaddis 2005, 75–78, 166.

21 Gaddis 1997, 261; Gaddis 2005, 77–78, 166; Hershberg 2010, 65–67.

22 Gaddis 1997, 260; Brown 2013, 106.

23 Valenta 1990, 6–17; De La Torre 2003, 123.

24 Pérez 2015a, 263.

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consequences contributed to the increased engagement in economic relations with the Soviet Union and the reorganization of Cuba's economic model, including Soviet exports and trade with the Socialist bloc.<sup>25</sup> The success of the Cuban revolution did not depend on the Soviet alliance solely, although the relations strengthened the revolution's international appearance. For Cuba, a close relationship with the Soviet Union also provided military support against the United States, in addition to benefitting the Soviet Union by offering a site of military presence in the vicinity of the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, like with many aspects of the revolution, Cuba's relationship with the Soviet Union was not static. After the initial establishment of cooperation, the Cuba–Soviet relations became strained in the late 1960s as a result of Castro's interest in supporting revolutionary movements in Latin America. By offering his aid to the revolutionaries, Castro supported several attempts to overthrow governments with which the Soviet Union wanted to establish commercial and diplomatic connections. The tension was recognized by Castro himself, who was not willing to give in on Cuba's internationalism in favor of the protégé position. Castro also directly criticized the Soviet Union's domestic and foreign policies despite relating to both.<sup>27</sup> As the evolving Cuba–Soviet relations suggest, Cuba maintained considerable autonomy in its foreign policy in the Cold War, regardless of its economic and ideological dependence on the Soviet Union.

Reaching the 1970s, Cuba–Soviet relations improved and Castro's public criticism of the Soviet Union ceased. In addition to Cuba's economic dependency on Soviet Union, the relationship also improved because of the shifts in the balance of power and influence of Cuba in Latin America. Latin America was no longer a geopolitical priority for the Cuban government: the revolutionary movements had been defeated, Cuba had cut its material support to the remaining groups, and Ernesto "Che" Guevara had died while promoting Cuban revolutionary ideas in Bolivia in 1967.<sup>28</sup> Ideologically, Castro acknowledged the Soviet Union as the leader of the Socialist family. In international politics, Havana proceeded in accordance with Moscow. By the early 1980s, Cuba had also employed the Soviet model of institutionalized revolutionary structures.<sup>29</sup>

### *Cuban–American Connections*

Although the periods examined in this study constitute a history of antagonism, polarization, and mutual hostility in Cuban–American diplomatic relations, the period entails also a history of bilateral communication—or at least bilateral efforts at dialogue and rapprochement. Since the beginning of Castro's rule and throughout the Cold War, the Cuban government engaged in dialogue with every president of the United States to some extent. Sometimes the dialogue concerned specific, urgent topics; other times, the matters of mutual interest included some of the most deeply-rooted, long-standing issues between the two countries. Some attempts succeeded while others failed.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, the attempts at dialogue show that the complex

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25 Pérez 2015a, 259, 281.

26 Valenta 1990, 6–17.

27 Gleijeses 2002, 217–218.

28 Gleijeses 2002, 220–221.

29 Gleijeses 2002, 226.

30 Gaddis 1997, 179–178; LeoGrande & Kornbluh 2015, 2–3.



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relations of the Cuban and U.S. government were not static at any point. Castro's stance on the United States was not carved in stone: his vision of foreign policy evolved and adjusted to circumstances.<sup>31</sup> Within the time frame of this study, there were seven presidents in the United States.<sup>32</sup> Throughout the era, Castro remained in power in Cuba, thus defying also each attempt on his life or the continuity of the revolution from the United States.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from the global atmosphere, what made the relationship between Cuba and the United States even more complicated were the domestic dimensions of the bilateral connections. Most tangible and influential of the dimensions was the presence of a large number of Cubans in the United States and their experience of the island mirrored in both U.S. domestic politics and foreign policy regarding Cuba. By three waves of immigration, the Cuban community in the United States formed the largest Latin American immigrant community of the country.<sup>34</sup> In the first wave, from 1959 to 1962, émigrés affected by the redistribution of wealth and loss of political power in the revolution left the island. By 1965, approximately 211,000 Cubans had left the country, and by the early 1970s, the number had increased by 277,000.<sup>35</sup> In the 1980s, hundreds of thousands of Cubans left the island on boats and rafts, heading for the coast of Florida. In the months of the Mariel Boatlift alone, from April to October in 1980, as many as 125,000 Cubans arrived in the United States after a particularly severe drop in Cuba's economy.<sup>36</sup>

Throughout the Cold War era, the United States introduced and enforced specific laws on immigration from Cuba and the status of Cuban immigrants in the United States. The state of Florida became a central site for Cubans in the United States: from the southern tip of Florida, a distance of merely 90 miles separated Cubans on the island and in the United States. After Fidel Castro announced in September 1965 that Cubans could leave the island if they wished, the United States opened the borders for immigration and gave preference to those migrants with already existing family ties to the United States. In 1966, the law enacted by President Johnson allowed Cubans reaching the United States to pursue permanent residence after one year in the country. Regarding the connections from the United States to Cuba, in 1963, under President Kennedy, the United States issued a travel ban to Cuba for citizens of the United States and a ban on financial transactions with Cuba. President Carter allowed the easing of the travel restrictions in 1977 when the two countries publicly reached a partial détente.<sup>37</sup>

In the 1970s, Cuba–U.S. relations more generally experienced a brief period of ease and dissolving of some of the tension. In 1974, Henry Kissinger took steps to bring an end to the hostile policy of the United States towards Cuba, which he deemed counterproductive. While the United States took on a new, softer policy on Cuba, it also increasingly considered Cuba a Soviet client in the wake of the reinforced relations between the two and the Cuban adaptation

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31 LeoGrande & Kornbluh 2015, 5.

32 Eisenhower (1953–1961), Kennedy (1961–1963), Johnson (1963–1969), Nixon (1969–1974), Ford (1974–1977), Carter (1977–1981), and Reagan (1981–1989).

33 Valdés 2008, 39.

34 Pérez 2015a, 277.

35 Brenner et al. 2008, 11–12.

36 Torres 2001, 105–108; Pedraza 2007, 151–152, 180; Pérez-Stable 2012, 121–122.

37 Pedraza 2007, 120–122; Ziegler 2007, 24–26.

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of the Soviet economic model in the early 1970s.<sup>38</sup> However, in the 1980s, Cuba's global participation decreased and tensions mounted again in Cuba–US relations. Thus, in foreign politics, Cuba became more isolated again. In 1982, the United States, under President Reagan, designated Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism that provided support to militant communism in Angola. In Cuba, rumors circulated on another attack against Cuba, and daily life continued to be marked by the tense Cuba–U.S. relations.<sup>39</sup> In 1985, Castro suspended the immigration agreement allowing as many as 20,000 Cubans a year to immigrate to the United States. Instead, Castro initiated the repatriation of approximately 3,000 Cubans who had criminal records or suffered from mental illness. The Cuban government also brought to a halt the visits to the island by Cubans living in the United States.<sup>40</sup>

The long and difficult history of immigration shared by Cuba and the United States portrays the human dimension of the countries' bilateral connections better than anything else. While historian Anita Casavantes Bradford calls the setting “the two Cubas,” scholar of religion Miguel A. De La Torre refers to the dualistic nature of Cuban life led on both the island and in the United States, particularly in Miami, as one Cuba *allá* (there) and another *aquí* (here).<sup>41</sup> The dualism also carries a historiographical sense of temporality: the Cuba of yesterday (*Cuba de ayer*) as a site of vanished dreams, replaced by nostalgia, among the Cuban community in the United States.<sup>42</sup>

The decades addressed in this study are decades marked by shifting immigration policies by both governments. As such, they have meant changing conditions for Cubans on the island and in the United States in their everyday life and social relations. Apart from diplomatic relations, immigration policies affected, often in deeply intimate and emotional ways, the lives of families, communities, and friendships extending to both sides of the waters. In these webs of human experiences, the bilateral relations extending from one country to another were also webs of relationships characterized by continuity and discontinuity, stories of separation, narratives of both communion and betrayal, and emotions of loss, longing, and continuous tension. As the histories of immigration from Cuba to the United States suggest, outside the leader's offices, the long-reaching repercussions of the Cold War were experienced daily in Cuban homes on both sides of the Florida Straits.

### *The Cuban Revolution and Latin America*

Throughout the periodization of this study, a significant feature of Cuban revolutionary ideology and foreign policy was the international dimension of the revolution. It was also a factor placing Cuba into a role of an active agent of the Cold War instead of a mere object of the United States' and the Soviet Union's aspirations and operations in the Caribbean. Castro's vision of exporting the revolution also formed an antithesis to the early attempts by the United States to overthrow the Cuban regime by a counterrevolution.<sup>43</sup>

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38 Mesa-Lago 1978, 141–142; Gleijeses 2002, 224–226; Ziegler 2007, 24–26; LeoGrande & Kornbluh 2015, 126–131.

39 Drachman 2002, 181; Pérez 2015a, 302.

40 Torres 2001, 105–108; Pedraza 2007, 151–152, 180; Pérez-Stable 2012, 121–122.

41 De La Torre 2003, 13; Bradford 2014, 5–8.

42 De La Torre & Aponte 2001, 47.

43 Brown 2013, 104; Pérez 2015a, 298.

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In the first place, Cuba extended its influence to Latin America.<sup>44</sup> Cuba was in the middle of the Latin American Cold War as the region's first country with a successful socialist revolution. Thus, from 1959 onwards, Cuba played a crucial role in the politics of the region, transmitting the Cold War atmosphere to Latin America. With the Cuban revolution, communism became a present influence, potential, and reality in the day-to-day life.<sup>45</sup> Cuba's influential role in Latin America ultimately brought the U.S. leaders to perceive the power of Castro's victory in the example it provided to Central American countries. Consequently, in this awakening, the U.S. Cold War policy began to shift from a hemispheric perspective, directed at the military threat of the Soviet Union, to potentially emerging transnational communism. Before Castro's rule, the United States had seemed indifferent to the Cold War reaching Latin America; yet with the first successful revolution in the region, the threat became more real than before.<sup>46</sup> For Latin America, Castro's successful revolution thus exposed also the vulnerability of the United States' hegemony and control over the region.<sup>47</sup>

In the Latin American context, the Cuban revolution became a nexus between the Cold War and the region as it magnified the political militancy, Left and Right, and responded directly to the complex web of historical and present relations of the Latin American countries with the United States. Thus Cuba acted as a catalyst for the region's engagement in the Cold War and intensified the Cold War tension in Latin America.<sup>48</sup> As the example of Cuba's revolution was found inspirational, it influenced other countries, such as Nicaragua, in their revolutionary aspirations even decades later. Following Castro's ascent to power, a wave of new rebellious activity spread on the continent. Even though the spirit of Cuba did not result in overthrowing the reigning governments, the idea lived on through revolutionary aspirations and idealization portrayed by Cuba.<sup>49</sup>

For Latin American countries, Castro's success in overthrowing the right-wing dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista made concrete the potential of a revolution: an idealized vision of a leftist revolution incarnated in Cuba and realistically possible to be followed in other countries as well.<sup>50</sup> From Cuba, the spirit of the revolution was exported to Latin America also through military advice, training, weaponry, and financial assistance. Small, dedicated groups of Cuban revolutionaries promoted the ideas in other Latin American countries in order to stimulate uprising and revolutions. Castro's closest advisors, such as Ernesto "Che" Guevara, devoted much of their time to sponsor rebellions in neighboring countries. Che famously became the face of the revolution, especially in Bolivia, where he also died in 1967 in an ambush by the CIA.<sup>51</sup> Altogether Cuba worked to advance its revolutionary aspirations in a dozen countries, at times more directly and other times through background support while toning down the public rhetoric on revolutionary internationalism.<sup>52</sup> Cuba's participation in the struggle for influence in Latin America in the early 1960s even matched the attempts by the

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44 Gleijeses 2002, 21–22.

45 Miller 1991, 145; Ching, Buckey & Lozano-Alonso 2007, 237; Brown 2013, 106.

46 Gleijeses 2002, 217; Darnton 2014, 111, 115–117.

47 Tombs 2002, 67; Keller 2013, 129–130.

48 Tombs 2002, 67–70; Brands 2010, 3–4; Brown 2013, 106.

49 Tombs 2002, 67–68; Brands 2010, 3; Darnton 2014, 111; Pérez 2015a, 298.

50 Keller 2013, 130; Darnton 2014, 117.

51 Gleijeses 2002, 23–24; Brands 2010, 3–4; Darnton 2014, 117, 127–128, 137.

52 Gleijeses 2002, 214, 217; Brown 2013, 104.

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United States and the Soviet Union in influencing the region's future, especially after the military alliance of Cuba and the Soviet Union, followed by their joint efforts to encourage leftist uprisings. As a response, the United States launched an economic program, the Alliance for Progress, to further invest in counterinsurgency, covert action undermining revolutionary operations, and direct military interventions against radical leftist revolutions.<sup>53</sup>

In the 1970s, Latin American countries experienced a wave of empowerment as a result of a series of shifts in the global dynamics of the Cold War: the stage of détente in the superpower relations, the traumatic experience of Vietnam in the United States, the oil crisis of 1973–1974, and changes in international finance. All these episodes seemed to point to the decline of U.S. hegemony and, consequently, the Western interpretation of the Cold War. A sense of optimism evoked by the hardships of the West, and the bitter memory of US interventions in the region in the 1960s, led Latin American countries to pursue a redefinition of relations with the United States.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, the revolutionary movements, also those supported by the Cuban government, seemed to have lost their momentum. They were defeated one after another, and Fidel Castro began to reconsider his support and advocacy for hemispheric revolutionary assistance. At the same time, Cuba's economy became more dependent on the Soviet Union, which also swayed Castro to adjust his Latin American policy to the lines drawn in Moscow.<sup>55</sup>

For the revolution, the 1970s became an era of more sophisticated foreign politics. In a shift from guerrilla tactics to more conventional diplomacy, the Cuban government found new openings in relations not only with the Soviet Union and the United States but also with Latin America and Western Europe. Gleijeses calls this the maturation point of Cuban foreign policy.<sup>56</sup> In this period, Cuba's engagement with other Latin American countries increased. From 1972 onwards, Peru and Argentina, among others, established diplomatic relations with Cuba—bringing to an end the state of isolation for Cuba as the lonely signpost for communism in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>57</sup> The newly gained more respectable role in Latin America also helped Cuba explore diplomacy and economic relations with Western countries such as France, Great Britain, Sweden, and Japan.<sup>58</sup>

In Latin America, Cuba's interests were decreasing in the 1980s. Economic challenges and foreign pressure weakened Latin American dictatorships established on the two preceding decades. The decline in leadership paved the way for greater shifts in political and economic landscapes: a return to electoral democracy and neoliberal economy. While this was interpreted as a landmark victory for the United States and the end of Latin America's Cold War, it did not end the conflicts in the region but transformed them towards issues such as socioeconomic injustice, radical populism, drugs, and illegal immigration.<sup>59</sup> In international politics, the early 1980s marked a period of increasing tensions and weakening influence in international relations for Cuba.<sup>60</sup>

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53 Gleijeses 2002, 214–215; Brands 2010, 3–4.

54 Brands 2010, 5–6.

55 Gleijeses 2002, 214, 217–222, 224–226.

56 Gleijeses 2002, 229.

57 Mesa-Lago 1978, 118–125; Gleijeses 2002, 116–125; Pérez 2015a, 300.

58 Gleijeses 2002, 224.

59 Brands 2010, 6–7.

60 Pérez 2015a, 301–302.

In Latin America, the Cold War was a series of overlapping conflicts. The complexity of the Cold War in the region became visible in social, political, and economic issues of both national and international origin. The hegemony of the United States clashed with Latin American nationalism: from a historical perspective, the Cold War in the region also carried in itself elements of decolonization and the rise of the Third World.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, the agency of Latin American countries was not solely dependent on the United States as the region was not a monolith in terms of ideologies and expressions of the Cold War. In each country, both internal and external factors contributed to the Cold War setting in which Latin American countries appeared as active agents in the field.<sup>62</sup>

Through the 1960–80s, the Latin American region was divided in its approach to the Cold War. While South American countries such as Brazil and Argentina were strongly marked by anti-communist orientation and a perceived threat of leftist insurgency, smaller Central American and Caribbean countries contained a realistic prospect of revolutionary movements attempting to seize power.<sup>63</sup> In Latin America, confrontations emerged on several fronts and levels, resulting in a polarization of ideologies and politics, rapid shifts of power from dictatorship to democracy, and often bloody and violent internal conflicts. The Cold War was thus an era of instability and a series of crises following each other in Latin America.<sup>64</sup>

## 2. Global Catholicism and the Revolutionary Years

### *Catholic Social Doctrine and Marxism*

In order to analyze the socio-political discourse of the Cuban revolution as an exchange between socialist and Catholic doctrines, it is necessary to acknowledge the long-standing history of Catholicism confronting Marxist, socialist, and communist ideologies. At the same time, the history of the confrontation between the Catholic Church and communism is woven into the evolving history of Catholic social doctrine. The long entanglement of Catholicism and socialism was initiated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the Catholic Church first defined its stance to Marxist ideas. Papal encyclicals, which normatively addressed all Catholics in the world, commented on Marxism as a competing doctrine incompatible with Catholicism. In the following decades, the Church treated socialism and communism as erroneous ideologies that aimed at provoking social upheaval and friction between classes.<sup>65</sup>

Historically, the most crucial issues of socialism for the Church were the rebuttal of an individual's rights, materialistic atheism, and consequently, the rejection of divine and transcendent, all resulting in the overturning of the social order. Socialism was against the natural law to which the Church gave authority, claiming that its removal would lead to the destruction of societies and humankind.<sup>66</sup> From early on, among the most crucial controversies between Catholic and socialist doctrine was the issue of an individual's rights to private property, material goods, and means of production, all of which were held in high esteem by the Church and rejected in socialist doctrine. Also, the role of religion in civic life was a crucial

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61 Brands 2010, 7.

62 Storm Miller 2013, 78.

63 Darnton 2014, 110–111.

64 Brands 2010, 1–2, 4.

65 *Nostis et Nobiscum* 8.12.1849; Coppa 2008, 141–142.

66 *Qui Pluribus* 9.11.1846; *Quod Apostolici Muneris* 28.12.1878.

matter: among the problematic features of communism was the absence of religion in civic and public life, which the Church interpreted as a rejection of the divine order and natural law.<sup>67</sup> At the heart of the confrontation laid also the question of authority. According to the Church, the world fell into an order of divine planning: the structures and hierarchies of civil society, with differences in dignity, rights, and power, emerged from divine, sacred order. Since the Catholic Church saw socialism as a doctrine set to dissolve these structures, it was also an act against the divine order, threatening the very foundation of both the Church and society. In the contradiction of order and authority, the Church portrayed itself as the defender of souls and the world, a pioneer in the battle against socialism and for maintaining peace.<sup>68</sup>

Catholic social doctrine developed in the decades following the rise of Marxist thought. *Rerum Novarum*<sup>69</sup> was Pope Leo XIII's encyclical that formed the body of moral and social teaching that guided Catholic social participation.<sup>70</sup> With a focus on labor and capital, the document was foundational for the development of Catholic social doctrine. While the encyclical condemned socialism, it also rejected unrestricted capitalism. According to Pope Leo XIII, the humankind could not solve the pressing social issues without the participation of the Catholic Church: *Rerum Novarum* acknowledged the suffering of workers, advocated for just wages, and discussed the role of the Church on social issues related to the industrial revolution. In the document, the Church both supported labor union movements and defended the individual's right to private property as a counterforce to socialism. The encyclical addressed the relationship between the State and its citizens: according to the document, the State was to promote social justice through the protection of rights. Correspondingly, the task of the Church was to maintain the harmony of the classes in society while teaching social principles to the humankind. The encyclical also introduced the idea of the preferential option for the poor, which was later developed further into one of the key concepts of Catholic social teaching.<sup>71</sup>

In 1931, Pope Pius XI<sup>72</sup> stated that “no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist.”<sup>73</sup> By these words, it was clear that for individual Catholics, the matter was a choice between two incompatible visions: it was not possible to profess to both Catholicism and socialism. The Holy See declared that Catholicism and communism were incompatible in all settings and for all causes. As communism was deemed “intrinsically wrong,” Catholics were not to collaborate with it in any way.<sup>74</sup> The Church stood as a counterforce to communism and called upon its flock to join the battle. The role of the Church and the papal institution was to defend the world against communism, in favor of the freedom of religion, and to use its authority to call public attention on the dangers of communist doctrine. The battle was also transcendent, as Pope Pius XI's appeals to Virgen Mary to assist in the fight proposed.<sup>75</sup>

The Cold War became a scene of agency for the Catholic Church in its opposition to communism. In the early stages of the period, following the expansion of communism globally

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67 *Quanta Cura* 8.12.1864.

68 *Quod Apostolici Muneris* 28.12.1878; *Diuturnum* 29.6.1881; *Exeunte Iam Anno* 25.12.1888.

69 *Rerum Novarum* 15.5.1891.

70 Chadwick 1998, 312–320; Krier Mich 2004, 26; Bingemer 2016, 18.

71 *Rerum Novarum* 15.5.1891; Krier Mich 2004, 19–27; Bingemer 2016, 18.

72 Pius XI: 1922–1939.

73 *Quadragesimo Anno* 15.5.1931.

74 *Divini Redemptoris* 19.3.1937.

75 *Divini Redemptoris* 19.3.1937; *Ingravescentibus Malis* 29.9.1937; O'Malley 2008, 91.

and the emerging Iron Curtain in Europe, the battle took a new, more concrete form. The Church began to appear and present itself as the representation of the free world as opposed to the Soviet Bloc. Examples from European countries painted an image of State repression of religiosity under communist regimes, imprisonment of priests, and the marginalization of the Church in both State establishment and civil society. The Church faced internal difficulties in maintaining contact between the Vatican and the local churches behind the Iron Curtain. For local churches in socialist countries, the daily life of the clergy and laity presented a challenge of maintaining both autonomy and agency. Sometimes the local bishops behind the Iron Curtain even preferred silence from the Vatican for not making the situation more difficult.<sup>76</sup>

Among the most significant declarations of the Holy Office at the beginning of the Cold War era was the Decree Against Communism, issued in 1949. Declaring Catholicism and communism utterly irreconcilable, the decree pronounced that Catholics professing communist doctrine and activities would face excommunication.<sup>77</sup> The Church confirmed the decree in 1959, at the peak of the Cuban revolution.<sup>78</sup> On repeated occasions and platforms, the Catholic Church denounced the materialistic doctrine of communism, particularly regarding materialistic atheism. The Church could not, from the perspective of Catholic doctrine, reconcile with the denial of God's existence and the rejection of supreme, divine authority, which was central to communist doctrine building on material atheism. The doctrinal differences regarding transcendental order and the rejection of both the ecclesial hierarchy and divinely-constituted authority, such as the authority of parents, were thus among the most polarizing issues between Catholicism and communism.<sup>79</sup>

The Catholic rejection of materialistic atheism was also a battle to be fought by the laity. In 1957, Pope Pius XII<sup>80</sup> issued a call for lay Catholics to both preserve the Catholic faith and the Church, and to overcome in the struggle against communism. Assuring the laity of the Church's commitment to facing the enemy, Pius XII wrote: "Christ's Church has no intention of yielding around to her avowed enemy, atheistic communism, without a struggle." Furthermore, as the Pope's address in a global congress of the lay apostolate alluded, the battle was to take place in heavenly battlegrounds; the fight against communism had reached the transcendental scale.<sup>81</sup>

In the 1960s, the social doctrine of the Catholic Church developed remarkably under the direction of Pope John XXIII<sup>82</sup>, who enjoyed unprecedented public support and popularity.<sup>83</sup> During his papacy, the most remarkable accomplishment was the summoning of the Second Vatican Council, which set the ground for a historic shift in the Church's teaching and relations with the modern world in the early 1960s. Aside from setting in motion a series of foundational reforms within the Church, John XXIII was known for his openness towards the social participation of the Church and Catholics, which was also reflected in his commitment to developing Catholic social teaching further. In his encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, published in

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76 Kent 2002, 191–196, 202–205; O'Malley 2008, 91, 235.

77 Kent 2002, 242; Coppa 2008, 151; Fejérdy 2016, 15.

78 Beozzo 1995, 398.

79 Fejérdy 2016, 15–16.

80 Pius XII: 1939–1958.

81 Guiding Principles of the Lay Apostolate 5.10.1957.

82 John XXIII: 1958–1963.

83 Krier Mich 2004, 91–93; O'Malley 2008, 165.

1961, John XXIII reinforced the established social teaching by affirming the importance of the pursue of common good, a society with balanced sectors of production, employment and work, and the reduction of inequality. At the same time, the encyclical stated that individual freedom was to be balanced with civil authorities and that certain functions of welfare were reserved for the State.<sup>84</sup>

Among John XXIII's key themes was the advocacy of human rights, also regarding communism and repressive communist regimes in European Catholic countries. Among his most remarkable encyclicals was *Pacem in Terris*, which issued a call for universal peace in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the recently evoked threat of a global nuclear war. While the encyclical did not condemn communism as directly as had been customary in Catholic social doctrine, John XXIII aligned the Church with democracy and affiliated it with the divine authority and power to govern. However, he also acknowledged socialist movements for their positive elements, which came to effectively replace Pius IX's condemnation of any collaboration with communists.<sup>85</sup> Under John XXIII's papacy, the tone of Catholic rhetoric towards communism became focused on dialogue and cooperation, which also contributed to the emergence of the Holy See's *Ostpolitik*. As a vision of ecclesial diplomacy, *Ostpolitik* aimed at improving the conditions for life for Churches under communist regimes and preserving the unity of the global Catholic Church despite political and social turmoil.<sup>86</sup>

Catholic social doctrine continued to evolve under the papacy of Paul VI<sup>87</sup> from June 1963 to August 1978. The first of his most essential encyclicals, *Populorum Progressio*,<sup>88</sup> reinforced the principles of Catholic social teaching by focusing on the relations between the humankind and the economy: the right to a just wage, the security of employment, and fair conditions for work, while also acknowledging the ethics of resources and goods. In *Humanae Vitae*, one of the period's most crucial Catholic documents, Paul VI reaffirmed the Catholic teaching on marriage and family by the emphasis on Christian parenthood and the rejection of artificial contraception.<sup>89</sup> Regarding communism, Paul VI declared in his 1964 encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* that the Church was "driven to repudiate such ideologies as deny God and oppress the Church," claiming that "these ideologies are often identified with economic, social and political regimes; atheistic communism is a glaring instance of this."<sup>90</sup>

After Paul VI's death, Italian cardinal Albino Luciani was elected as his successor. He took the name John Paul I and ruled for 33 days. His sudden death brought about a new conclave, which elected the first Polish Pope in history: John Paul II held the See of Peter from October 1978 to April 2005. His pontificate opened a new chapter in the relationship between Catholicism and communism, as the long papacy coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Iron Curtain, and the détente of the Cold War. As the first Polish Pope, John Paul II represented a new approach to communism within the Church. With personal experience of and insight into living under a communist regime, John Paul II steered the Church

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84 *Mater et Magistra* 15.5.1961; Tombs 2002, 74–77; Krier Mich 2004, 93–99; Fejérdy 2016, 11, 15–18.

85 *Pacem in Terris* 11.4.1963; Krier Mich 2004, 99–104.

86 Fejérdy 2016, 120, 122.

87 Paul VI: 1963–1978. Born Giovanni Battista Montini.

88 *Populorum Progressio* 26.3.1967.

89 *Humanae Vitae* 25.7.1968; Krier Mich 2004, 154–162.

90 *Ecclesiam Suam* 6.8.1964.



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to challenge communism and establish stronger footholds for local churches under communist regimes. The impact was experienced globally: in the late 1980s, Pope John Paul II, and consequently, the Catholic Church, was credited for the fall of the Soviet system and the end of the Cold War through active support of the anti-socialist movement in Poland.<sup>91</sup>

### *Second Vatican Council*

Arguably the most significant episode of modern Catholicism was the convening of the Second Vatican Council, also referred to as Vatican II, in 1962–1965. Convened by Pope John XXIII already in 1959 and concluded by his successor Paul VI, the council brought the Church to revise its teaching in topics such as ecclesiology, social doctrine, pastoral work, ecumenism, and liturgy. In four sessions, convening annually in the Vatican<sup>92</sup>, approximately 2,500 council fathers—bishops—from all over the world participated in the revision and updating of the Church's teaching and role in contemporary world. The process became a turning point for modern Catholicism.<sup>93</sup>

In the council, the Catholic Church looked both inward and outward: the council reformed the Church's internal discourse and reality as well as the relations of the Church to the outside world. The Church took up not only internal dialogue but also dialogue with other Christian churches and the entire world. Apart from decisions on theology, the council mapped transformational new directions for the Church's role and participation in extra-ecclesial spheres and hence served as an opening from the Church towards society.<sup>94</sup> The council represented a shift in the Church's perspective: the Church turned its attention from itself to concrete issues and addressed contemporary problems such as socioeconomics and world peace. With the change of perspective, the Church also established its orientation to dialogue with all peoples, not only Catholics or Christians.<sup>95</sup>

The effects of the council were profound: a thorough process of reform for the entire global Church began with the decisions by the council. A specific concept used to describe both the spirit and the aim of the council was *aggiornamento*, translating from Italian to updating or modernizing. The council was an attempt to bring the Church up to date, which in itself carried the motivation of change and reform.<sup>96</sup> Through the council, the Catholic Church began to come to terms with modernity and the changing global atmosphere of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>97</sup> The council was also a communicative event from Rome to the world. The modern mass media of the 1960s covered the council, and news on the course of the council as well as its decisions spread everywhere. Within the Church, the new advances in communication technology also made it easy to implement the council's decisions directly and speedily.<sup>98</sup>

The outcomes of the theological reflection were expressed in the documents produced by the council. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* vocalized the revision of the liturgy, including the

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91 Krier Mich 2004, 225.

92 First period October–December 1962; second period September–December 1963; third period September–November 1964; fourth period September–December 1965.

93 O'Malley 2008, 94, 295–298; Fejérdy 2016, 11–14.

94 Krier Mich 2004, 120; O'Malley 2008, 95, 157–158.

95 O'Malley 2008, 233.

96 O'Malley 2008, 37, 295, 297, 299, 311.

97 O'Malley 2008, 89–90, 291.

98 O'Malley 2008, 34–35.

expansion of the liturgy's language from Latin to vernacular, and the enforcement of active lay participation in liturgical action. This set in motion a systematic reshaping of Roman Catholic liturgy that ensued immediately and continued in the following decades.<sup>99</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, expressed the council's ecclesiological principles. Among them was the renewed focus on the laity: the council attempted to introduce laypeople into the life of the Church as active subjects and to encourage active engagement and cooperation between the clergy and the laity. As a dimension particularly relevant for lay devotion, the council also discussed the role of the Virgin Mary in the Church.<sup>100</sup>

The last document promulgated by the council, *Gaudium et Spes*,<sup>101</sup> voiced the social doctrine of the Church. Offering a comprehensive vision of the Church's engagement in the modern world, the document discussed socio-economic changes and politics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as poverty and discrimination, and addressed the challenge of atheism. Promoting Christian humanism, the document highlighted the relational, dialogical dimension of human life and the meaning of life found in Christ. The keywords of the document were cooperation, friendship, dialogue, and mutuality between the Church and the world. At the heart of the profoundly transformative document was a change in theological methodology: the recognition of contemporary global reality and sensitivity to contextual factors contributed to an analysis arising from the lived reality instead of doctrinal and theological concepts.<sup>102</sup>

Among the key ideas emerging from the council was the principle of adaptation to both local and contemporary circumstances, introduced by the council as an essential principle for the life of the global Church. The principle contributed to a shift in the paradigm of cultural and geographical authority: the Church took a step away from Eurocentrism and allowed local churches on other continents and in other cultural contexts to exercise more autonomous agency. Similarly, the council decentralized episcopal authority and allowed for more autonomy in local decision-making.<sup>103</sup> Regarding dialogue with communism, as a result of Vatican II, papal statements, and *Ostpolitik*, the Holy See's image began to change from a servant of Western interests towards more active engagement in dialogue with communism and communist leadership both locally and globally.<sup>104</sup>

The council changed the image of the Catholic Church from static to dynamic, from a Church never changing to a church of change.<sup>105</sup> After the conclusion of the council, the new theological emphasis and practices were applied globally by the local churches. Following the example set by the council, numerous local councils and synods convened to interpret and reinforce the implementation of conciliar theology in the daily life of churches. Consequently, the processes of reception, interpretation, and installment of Vatican II's ideas in distinct Catholic regions and cultures gave rise to new theologies rooted in the outcomes of the council yet stemming from the local context.

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99 O'Malley 2008, 130, 139–141, 206.

100 LG; Tombs 2002, 79–80; O'Malley 2008, 186, 207.

101 GS.

102 GS; Tombs 2002, 80; Krier Mich 2004, 120–129; O'Malley 2008, 266–268.

103 O'Malley 2008, 140–141, 268–269.

104 Fejérdy 2016, 316.

105 Lehmann 1996, 48; O'Malley 2008, 34.

### *Latin American Catholicism*

In Latin America, the local churches received the council with excitement and positive responses despite the fact that the voices of Latin American theologians were absent from conciliar documents.<sup>106</sup> Consequently, the primary input from Latin America came at the stage of implementing the council in local contexts. The waves of change began while the council was still in progress: as the council approved the concluding documents during the conciliar sessions, local churches were able to process them and transmit the new theology to the life of the Church on a local level immediately.<sup>107</sup> Remarkably, the sense of reformation in ecclesial life coincided with the spirit of change and shifts in power balance and dynamics initiated in Latin America with the Cuban revolution in 1959.

A particularly efficient, well-organized group in the council was CELAM (*Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*), the umbrella organization for the twenty-two conferences of Latin American bishops participating in the council. In the conciliar proceedings, CELAM emphasized the tradition of working together, also drawing from the cultural cohesion of the region.<sup>108</sup> As a result, the reception of the council in Latin America proceeded as a speedy, almost immediate process of interpretation and implementation. Established in 1955 as an umbrella linking together various national conferences of the bishops in Central and South America, CELAM brought together the local representatives of the region approximately every ten years. In 1968, the second general assembly of CELAM was held in Medellín, Colombia, to examine the contemporary reality of Latin America in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the newly emerging conciliar theology.<sup>109</sup> More than an adaptation or application of the council, the Medellín conference came to generate a genuine, new expression of the Latin American Church.<sup>110</sup>

In the spirit of the council, the Medellín conference acknowledged the overarching, prevailing socio-economic conditions in Latin America and committed the Church to actively addressing and participating in solving the economic and social problems.<sup>111</sup> The bishops called the continent's reality "a situation of sin" and aimed particular criticism at the poverty and oppression of the masses in countries that were Catholic. They also issued a call for the poor to take an active role in constructing a new society, to exercise the power of the people, and to work for the liberation of human beings from oppressive structures.<sup>112</sup> The Church was to participate in the transformation of societies through drastic changes in liturgy and evangelization, the education of the poor, and the promotion of popular communities and organizations on the grassroots level.<sup>113</sup> The sharp social critique and prophetic vision of the Church's mission expressed in Medellín became a turning point for the Catholic Church in Latin America.<sup>114</sup> Linking with CELAM's endorsement of the conciliar vision was the emergence of new Latin American theologies and pastoral practices. Local churches engaged

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106 Dussel 1991, 319–320.

107 O'Malley 2008, 35–36.

108 Tombs 2002, 81–82; O'Malley 2008, 122.

109 Lehmann 1996, 50; Krier Mich 2004, 241.

110 Dussel 1991, 321.

111 Krier Mich 2004, 241.

112 Documentos Finales de Medellín; Krier Mich 2004, 242–243.

113 Krier Mich 2004, 244.

114 Krier Mich 2004, 243–244.

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in the process of reception and reflection of conciliar theology. The transformative reception of Vatican II and the expressions of support by CELAM thus gave rise to a multitude of local, contextual theologies emerging from national ecclesial and socio-political circumstances.<sup>115</sup>

In particular, the new pastoral and theological currents of the council and Latin America's socio-political context of the 1960s took shape in liberation theology:<sup>116</sup> a theology emphasizing people, especially the oppressed and the poor, as the primary subjects of Christianity's liberating message and praxis. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, visions of liberation theology spread in Latin America and resulted in a rich array of movements: conferences, workshops, grass-roots advocacy of the theology, and activism, such as clergy moving into the poor *barrios* to work with the people.<sup>117</sup> As a distinctive theoretical and reflexive expression of renewal in Latin American Catholicism, liberation theology became the emerging interpretation of Catholic social teaching in the local context. The most prominent theologians formulating the new vision were the Peruvian theologian and Dominican father Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino, whose ideas were expressed in his foundational book *Teología de la liberación*, published in 1971,<sup>118</sup> the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff, and the Uruguayan Jesuit Father Juan Luis Segundo.

Conceptually, at the center of the new theology was the idea of liberation, both in Christian salvation and regarding the socio-economic conditions of the region: exploitation, poverty, lack of opportunities, and a prevailing system of injustice characterized as sins of social nature, or structural sin. A foundational dimension of the struggle towards liberation was the critical reflection on praxis. Through this emphasis, liberation theology placed people at the center: its particularly well-known and influential emphasis was the attention given to the poor and the oppressed, known as the Preferential Option for the Poor. The reflection stemmed from an interpretation of Christian faith through the experience struggle and the critical analysis of both society and its ideological foundations and the Church and its practices. Theological reflection originated from the grassroots, corresponding to the lived, contextual reality of the people, which was to be shared and proclaimed by the Church. In the theoretical reflection, some found Marxist analysis helpful in describing the prevailing reality. In praxis, Catholics in some Latin American countries found that the ideals of Marxism resonated with the newly pronounced emphasis in the social consciousness and participation of the Church in the struggle of the people.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, liberation theology grew around agency on the grassroots level. It aimed at empowering and authorizing laypeople to work actively in their communities, training them in theological and spiritual practices such as reading the Bible from the perspective of their lived reality. Fundamentally, the method presumed a commitment to transforming all activity within the Church from isolated doctrine to the agency and engagement of the people in their real context.<sup>120</sup>

Although liberation theology became a vital force of change in Latin American

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115 Krier Mich 2004, 246; Luciani 2017, 1–9, 71.

116 Krier Mich writes: "There is no 'one' universal liberation theology; there are as many liberation theologies as there are communities engaged in this process. Liberation theology, although originating in Latin America, is not just a theological and pastoral movement for the developing nations." Krier Mich 2004, 272.

117 Hebblethwaite 1986, 81–82; Dussel 1991, 320–322; Carriquiry 2002, 238–239.

118 In English, published as *A Theology of Liberation* in 1973.

119 Gutiérrez 1971, 5–12, 24–25, 29–33, 49–51, 54–57, 58–71; Krier Mich 2004, 261, 264.

120 Krier Mich 2004, 259, 264–265, 268.

Catholicism, it faced institutional opposition both within the region and from the Vatican. With its new leadership, supported by the Vatican, CELAM removed its support for liberation theology in the late 1970s, assuming a more conservative stance on theology and praxis.<sup>121</sup> The third general assembly held in Puebla, Mexico, in 1979, was designed to reverse the direction set at Medellín and by liberation theology, which raised controversy within the Church in Latin America. The official focus of the conference was evangelization in Latin America: while the Preferential Option for the Poor was approved and reinforced in light of evangelization, the institutional legitimacy of liberation theology began to diminish after the assembly.

In the early 1980s, liberation theology came into conflict with the Roman Curia, especially with the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) in charge of the doctrine and teaching of the universal church. Pope John Paul II, the pope of Polish origin committed to opposing communism, supported the attempt to counter liberation theology. In the campaign against liberation theology, CDF issued instructions and worked to silence the most prominent liberation theologians, raising questions about Marxist thought employed in theological reflection and proposing that the approach ultimately made theology inferior to Marxist ideology. In Latin America, the local advocates of liberation theology met the questions with resistance. Apart from criticizing Marxist thought, the Holy See also viewed liberation theology in a more favorable light: it accepted some of the basic principles of liberation theology, such as the autonomy of local churches in applying theology into practice, addressing unjust social structures, the role of communities on a grassroots level, and the agency of the laypeople, as valuable resources of the Church.<sup>122</sup>

Ultimately, the campaign was successful in its attempt to rebottle liberation theology as a hemispheric theological model. Apart from CDF, also groups of professional theologians and members of the ecclesial hierarchy in both Latin America and Europe accused liberation theology of bonding with Marxism and committing to leftist political movements, which in the ongoing Cold War raised controversy considering the Church's historical opposition to socialism and communism. In this sense, liberation theology became not only an issue of theological orthodoxy but also a matter of power, autonomy, and authority between Latin American churches and the Holy See. The struggle also reflected two competing visions of the Church: a centralized Church under the leadership of the Vatican and a regional, culturally and historically multifaceted Church exercising autonomy based on locality.<sup>123</sup> Despite the institutional rejection of liberation theology, its ideas and practices remained a vital force of pastoral and theological action in the field.<sup>124</sup>

In Latin America, the 1970s was a decade of political upheaval, social unrest, and militarism. As numerous countries were, at some point, ruled by repressive and military-supported leadership, Catholicism as the culturally and socially predominant religious tradition became intertwined in the political life of the region. An intrinsic dimension of Latin American religious realities and theological discourse was the presence of poverty, violence, oppression, and the violation of human rights. In several countries, movements of liberation theology became associated with politics by either approval of or resistance to the prevailing ideologies

121 Hebblethwaite 1986, 86; Krier Mich 2004, 247.

122 Hebblethwaite 1986, 83, 85–87; Krier Mich 2004, 269–271; Gibson 2006, 192–193, 195–197.

123 Cox 1988, 10–16; Krier Mich 2004, 256–257, 268, 271; Gibson 2006, 196–197.

124 Krier Mich 2004, 246–249, 256–258.

and governments. On repeated occasions, this led to outbursts of violence and resulted in the death of clerics, especially in the 1980s in countries such as Guatemala and El Salvador. From these experiences grew a sense of martyrdom among liberation theologians and the clergy in the field.<sup>125</sup>

### 3. The Revolution in Cuba

#### *The Course of the Revolution*

Cuba received the year 1959 with a revolution. The victory was preceded with years of insurrection and revolutionary aspirations spreading through the island: in the late 1950s, there were several fronts of revolutionary movements in Cuba. What was common to them was active opposition to General Fulgencio Batista, the president of Cuba before the revolution. The struggle brought the groups together, although their agendas were different. The nuances and approaches of the groups were also diverse: what they shared was a vision of purging Cuba from corruption, raising the standards of living, and bringing modernization to the island. There was a deep, popular desire for a shift away from corruption, violence, and gangsterism among the general public, and the revolution occurred as a counterforce to what preceded it.<sup>126</sup>

The backbone of the revolution's success was the period of guerrilla warfare and the popular support it garnered in 1958–1959. Among the revolutionary groups was *Movimiento 26 de Julio*,<sup>127</sup> the July 26<sup>th</sup> Movement, led by Fidel Castro and his trusted men. Already in 1958, M-26-7 had become the largest and most dynamic group unifying other revolutionary cohorts while gaining increasing popular support. What proved crucial for the success of the movement in its rise to predominance was effective leadership, strategic positions, and credibility in its plan of action. Castro's group was capable of unifying the diverse movements and appealing to the masses simultaneously.<sup>128</sup> Moving from the countryside to the cities and towards the capital, the revolutionary groups unified and led by Castro garnered widespread support from the Cuban people as they gained victories on their way. As the guerrillas gained victories, the message of the revolution spread and served to legitimize their power. Later on, the narrative of heroic struggle transformed into a claim of legitimacy for the revolutionary rule,<sup>129</sup> as Castro appeared as a dynamic, promising leader with charisma both by nature and under the circumstances of popular support for a revolution.<sup>130</sup>

As Batista fled the country on the last day of 1958, the New Year began with the revolutionaries arriving victoriously to the capital city of Havana.<sup>131</sup> From there began the process of establishing the revolutionary rule. It is crucial to note that in the beginning, there was no single, commonly shared vision of the revolution: in the first months of 1959, the revolution began to take shape amongst the many contesting visions of what the revolution was and how it was to be steered. Thus, the first months focused on the consolidation of the

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125 Krier Mich 2004, 255; Salinas 2009, 3–4.

126 Brenner et al. 2008, 7, 9; Valdés 2008, 31–32.

127 The movement was named after the date in 1953 when Fidel Castro and others attempted to initiate an uprising at the Moncada garrison in Santiago de Cuba. Brenner et al. 2002, 7–8.

128 de la Fuente 2001, 259; Brenner et al. 2008, 7.

129 Valdés 2008, 31, 33–34.

130 Valdés 2008, 33–34; Pérez 2015a, 246–248.

131 de la Fuente 2001, 259.

revolution.<sup>132</sup> The revolutionary reorganization of the country and the nation was a thorough process. The revolution touched upon all aspects of Cuban life: its reach spanned from politics and economy to social life and culture, from healthcare to education, from the countryside to the cities. The all-encompassing nature of the revolution became the framework of life on the island.<sup>133</sup>

The first years of the revolution constituted the consolidation of Castro's vision and rule. The consolidation phase was carried out by the means of legislation and changes in policy, advocacy invoking popular support, and concrete acts to apply the revolution's promises. Drastic changes were initiated in politics and economy by the new government in 1959 and 1960.<sup>134</sup> The first dramatic change executed by the revolutionary rule was the massive redistribution of wealth by a series of reform laws. In March 1959, the Agrarian Reform Law transformed the ownership of land by establishing a maximum landholding size and distributing the excess land to previously landless peasants. The Urban Reform Law cut the rental rates, and Cubans owning more than two pieces of property had to hand over their excess properties to the government in order to create collectively utilized properties out of them.<sup>135</sup>

Aside from property, the wealthiest Cubans lost also their economic and social privilege in the waves of redistribution: their private clubs were closed, private clinics were forced to treat patients outside the elite, and private beaches were opened to the public. Urban Afro-Cubans and the habitants of rural areas received immediate benefits for their historical lack of access to public wellbeing. Consequently, the redistribution of wealth became the moral foundation and a source of the legitimacy of the revolution for the previously dispossessed, further increasing the massive popular support of the revolution. At the same time, the redistribution constituted a loss of political power and stability for the elite, which brought many of them to strongly criticize the revolution.<sup>136</sup>

The new Cuban leadership established the structures of the revolution by the creation of offices, institutions, programs, laws, and officers in ranks. For Castro, despite his charismatic leadership and the authority appointed to him by his supporters, it was vital to ensure the continuity of the revolution and not root it to one man only.<sup>137</sup> In governance, power was centralized to a carefully chosen group of individuals. Throughout the first decades of the revolution, Fidel Castro held several central positions of power and responsibility in the government and the party. Around him, the immediate group consisted of some twenty confidants to whom authority was delegated.<sup>138</sup>

The revolution also faced criticism on the island. The policies, as well as the leadership of Castro, faced disapproval and rejection as political disaffection grew among those affected by the loss of property and assets in the revolutionary reforms.<sup>139</sup> With the presence of opposition, resistance, and counterrevolutionary efforts, the policies of the government towards dissidence became more restrictive. The government took drastic measures to eliminate

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132 de la Fuente 2001, 259; Guerra 2012, 56–67.

133 de la Fuente 2001, 276; Pérez-Stable 2012, 66–67, 77–84; Pérez 2015a, 253–261.

134 Chase 2015, 115; Pérez 2015a, 252–253.

135 Brenner et al. 2008, 8.

136 Brenner et al. 2008, 8; Pérez 2015a, 253.

137 Valdés 2008, 34–38.

138 Valdés 2008, 37–38; Pérez 2015a, 248–251.

139 Pérez 2015a, 254, 261.

opposition and resistance. By 1960, the government took over the print press, television, radio, and the institutions maintaining critical discourse.<sup>140</sup> The most radical elimination of opposition took place in the radicalization of the revolution after the Bay of Pigs invasion.<sup>141</sup> Following the failed attempt to overturn the revolutionary rule, Castro emphasized the necessity of national defense of the revolution and declared that the nature of the revolution was socialist, bridging nationalism and socialism to Cubanness. Defending the homeland became synonymous with defending the socialist revolution.<sup>142</sup> With the direct U.S. threat to Cuban national security, Castro also began to pursue more concrete relations with the Soviet Union.

With the radicalization came a period of severe repression. In the polarized atmosphere, an estimated 100,000 Cubans suspected of opposition to the regime were arrested while the definitions of revolutionaries, patriots, and good citizens became more synonymous with each other.<sup>143</sup> In 1965, 20,000 political prisoners were incarcerated in Cuba. The same year, the revolution established the UMAP program (*Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción*, Military Units to Aid Production) and the military began to assemble individuals designated as “socially deviant,” such as the political opponents of the revolution and the government, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and other religious missionaries, placing them in camps of prison-like conditions to conduct physical labor. According to Louis A. Pérez, the program had “routinely used torture and corporal punishments.” The program ended in 1968, after three years of operation.<sup>144</sup>

By the end of the 1960s, Cuban domestic politics had become more radical. The turn entailed a purge of Communist Party members and a reissued call for the moral virtues of the revolution.<sup>145</sup> According to Gleijeses, Castro was compensating for the defeats in foreign policy by the more intense exercise of the revolution on the island. In 1968, the government nationalized all the nonagricultural businesses that were still privately owned, such as cafes, street vendors, and auto repair shops. This led to both further destabilization of the economy and the government’s tighter control of the minutia of the Cuban daily life. Economic life suffered from mismanagement and low productivity, which the government attempted to remedy by voluntary labor. The state of hardship formed a new moral imperative for Cubans to participate in the revolution through the structures of voluntary work and civic service.<sup>146</sup>

The institutionalization of the revolution characterized the 1970s as the Communist Party of Cuba was placed into a central focus to represent and guarantee the continuity of the revolution.<sup>147</sup> In 1970, Cuba’s ambitious attempt to harvest 10 million tons of sugar fell short dramatically. The revolutionary stamina was put to the test with the hardship, which eventually led to Fidel Castro publicly admitting gross errors in the leadership and administration of the revolution. In daily life, the failure led to regular shortages of food and a decline in the production of consumer goods, which had a severe effect on the revolutionary spirit and

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140 Pérez 2015a, 256, 261–262.

141 Pérez 2015a, 262.

142 Valdés 2008, 33–34.

143 Brenner et al. 2008, 11; Pérez 2015a, 262.

144 Brenner et al. 2008, 11; Pérez 2015a, 276–277.

145 Brenner et al. 2008, 13.

146 Gleijeses 2002, 222; Pérez 2015a, 273–274.

147 Mesa-Lago 1978, 79; LeoGrande 2008, 51–52; Valdés 2008, 35–37; Pérez-Stable 2012, 117–118.



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*conciencia*, revolutionary consciousness and commitment.<sup>148</sup> From the economic downfall emerged the adaptation of the Soviet economic model in Cuba: the next years saw a change in the country's economy and a growth spurred by the changes.<sup>149</sup>

In the early 1970s, Castro repeatedly criticized the excessive centralization and bureaucratization of the administration as well as the expansion of State authority that had resulted in the diminishing role of mass organizations. The criticism led to drastic changes and reorganization of administrative structures, the institutionalization of the revolution. In 1975, the Cuban Communist Party (*Partido Comunista de Cuba*, PCC) organized the First Party Congress, and the process culminated in 1976 with both the promulgation of a new constitution and the introduction of the process of institutionalization, which was concluded a year later. Among the most significant reforms was the creation of *Poder Popular*, a mechanism for popular elections of representatives, and the renewed emphasis on the mass participation of Cubans in the revolutionary process. The municipal assemblies also served to advance the institutionalization of the revolution and decentralize decision-making. On a local level, the assemblies assumed authority over schools, health services, public transportation as well as services and factories providing for local consumption. In a similar streak of increasing popular participation, the revolutionary mass organizations experienced a period of revival.<sup>150</sup>

The institutionalization of popular participation also indicated the State's attempt to impose authority and control over civil society.<sup>151</sup> Similar phenomena occurred in the arts and cultural life. In Cuba, the first half of the 1970s has been called the Gray Period (*Quinquenio Gris*),<sup>152</sup> referring to the government's control over approved cultural expression, and consequently, the repression and censorship of artists and intellectuals in favor of an ideologically pure expression of the revolution's vision of culture. The period came to an end in 1976 with the founding of the Ministry of Culture and the redirection of culture on the island concerning the treatment of artists and the spheres of artistic expression.<sup>153</sup>

On the island, the 1970s became a decade of increased Soviet influence in political, economic, cultural, and daily life. Through trade relations, the import of Soviet artifacts, educational and professional exchange, and person-to-person connections, Soviet influence marked the 1970s cultural production in Cuba from arts to popular culture, cultural expressions and customs, and the official political cultures. The Soviet influence on the island became a daily experience, to which Cubans born in the era and bearing names of Russian origin testify as one of the many examples. In the 1970s and 1980s, tens of thousands of Cubans undertook education for engineering, computer science, and agriculture in the Soviet Union. In Cuba, an estimation of 7000 Soviet workers participated in the construction and development of infrastructure.<sup>154</sup>

The authority of the Communist Party continued to increase through the process of creating systematic and stable structures for the organization. In 1980, the Party convened for

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148 Pérez-Stable 1985, 292, 303; Pérez-Stable 2012, 101–102; Pérez 2015a, 271.

149 Gleijeses 2002, 222; Brenner et al. 2008, 13–14.

150 Mesa-Lago 1978, 79, 112–115; Dilla Alfonso & González Núñez 2008, 79–80; Pérez-Stable 2012, 104–108; Pérez 2015a, 277–279.

151 Mesa-Lago 1978, 115; Crahan 2008, 330.

152 The term was first used by the Cuban intellectual Ambrosio Fornet.

153 Mesa-Lago 1978, 106–111; Padura Fuentes 2008, 348–349; Chase 2015, 17.

154 Mesa-Lago 1978, 10; Pérez 2015a, 282.

its Second Congress with continuity as the crucial topic to be addressed.<sup>155</sup> The government also faced problems of legitimacy and governability, particularly on a street level, with the inefficiency of popular participation through mass organizations. From the mid-1980s on, this led the government to initiate a revision of civic participation and to create fora for discussion on civil society.<sup>156</sup> The revision contributed to, for instance, the increase of independence for artists in the 1980s. Consequently, as artists assumed a more visible, less inhibited cultural and aesthetic function for their work, the role of the arts in political expression decreased.<sup>157</sup>

The 1980s resembled the 1960s in the conditions for crafting policies. The revolutionary government continued to view the United States as a threat to national security, also with the diplomatic and economic isolation still effective. With the Soviet Union, Cuba was unsuccessful in redefining the nature of the relationship.<sup>158</sup> In the early 1980s, Cuba's economy had again become stagnant, despite the liberalization of the economy that was particularly important to those earning by self-employment, agriculture, and artistry.<sup>159</sup> As the government pointed the blame to the Soviet economic model and Cuba's willingness to adhering it, the critique also marked an implicit rejection of Soviet leadership.<sup>160</sup> Consequently, the historical processes that took place in the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s initiated a more open debate about the future of socialism on a global level. In Cuba, the discourse led to reversing the ideas of the Soviet model of the economy. In 1986, changes began to take place as Castro declared a conscious rectification of errors made in governance and policies, particularly regarding the economy. The Third Congress of the Party launched the rectification campaign to correct the mistakes made in administration and policy-making of the revolution. The congress also replaced a significant amount of the Central Committee members with new leaders in line with the rectification, thus contributing to a climate of change. Yet, by means of the rectification process, the ideological work of the revolution was steered strongly by the Party. At the same time, the process entailed also a populist dimension, as the Party encouraged citizens to assume more autonomy for their conditions of labor in the everyday reality of the revolutionary society.<sup>161</sup>

### *The Ideas of the Revolution*

The legitimacy of the revolutionary process built on conquering the past, overthrowing Batista, and bringing an end to repression and injustice. Throughout the decades covered in this study, the legitimacy was reinforced by placing national sovereignty and social justice at the center of governmental agenda. The central issues also continuously marked a symbolic return to the original promises of the revolution: the redistribution of wealth, the creation of just and equal conditions of life for all classes and races, the independence of the economy, and the sovereignty of the nation from external forces.<sup>162</sup> In a socio-political context, the revolution accomplished some of its greatest successes in the areas of education, health services, and

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155 LeoGrande 2008, 51.

156 Fernández 2008, 94–95.

157 Padura Fuentes 2008, 349.

158 Pérez 2015a, 302.

159 Pérez-Stable 2012, 123.

160 Brenner et al. 2008, 13.

161 LeoGrande 2008, 51–52; Pérez-Stable 2012, 124–127.

162 de la Fuente 2001, 259; Landau 2008, 41–43.

nutrition.<sup>163</sup>

From early on, Fidel Castro built the foundations of the revolutionary rule and its legitimacy on the support of the masses. The revolution was for the people, the revolutionary leadership declared. The revolution was introduced as a people's movement despite the strongly authoritative central governance and the vanguard as the face of the revolution. The support of the masses both legitimized the revolution and built a social imperative of moral support for the vanguard by the people.<sup>164</sup>

Among the most appealing concepts introduced to the masses was the idea of a nation and *la patria*, the fatherland and a home for all Cubans as dreamt by José Martí and reintroduced as Cuba's long-lasting dream by Fidel Castro.<sup>165</sup> Throughout the decades of the revolution, the government emphasized the nationalistic aspect of the revolution's ideology, tying the revolutionary process to the sentiments of a homeland, thus making them synonymous.<sup>166</sup> The nation was built and reinforced by an emphasis on class, race, and gender in revolutionary politics: the social politics of the revolution became a means to build the nation, and the ideal of the nation became central to reinforcing the revolution. Ultimately, the concept of *la patria* was both defined and defended through the revolution.<sup>167</sup>

The revolution evoked a sense of nationalism in its character as an inherently Cuban revolution. In the discursive framework of the revolution, Cuban nationalism also included an anti-American dimension, not invented but consciously reinforced by Castro.<sup>168</sup> With the strongly nationalistic character of the revolution, expressions of *la cubanidad*<sup>169</sup> and patriotism through civic participation became synonymous, emphasized aspects of the revolutionary ideas. Ultimately, also communism became synonymous with the revolution, and consequently, anticommunism with counterrevolutionary efforts.<sup>170</sup> The new definition of national identity worked in disfavor of Cuban societal and cultural institutions traditionally identifying with non-Cuban attributes of American or European origin.<sup>171</sup>

The revolution also addressed issues of social justice. The government set objectives to eliminate discrimination based on race and gender. In healthcare, vigorous training of professionals was organized to provide for universal healthcare on the island. In order to create a national education system available for everyone, all education from primary schools to higher education was nationalized and brought under State control. Education also became a bridge for intellectual commitment to the revolution. With thousands of university students and staff dispatched to the countryside, the literacy campaign of 1961 set out to, successfully, eliminate the illiteracy of adults. As the campaign made many of the educated urban Cubans aware of the inequalities within Cuban society, the revolution became strongly characterized by its educative aspirations.<sup>172</sup>

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163 Pérez 2015a, 283, 286–288.

164 Guerra 2012, 37–39.

165 de la Fuente 2001, 260; Pérez 2015a, 246.

166 Pérez-Stable 2012, 141.

167 Pérez-Stable 2012, 141.

168 Landau 2008, 41–42.

169 Thomas-Woodard 2003.

170 Pérez-Stable 2012, 124; Pérez 2015a, 256.

171 Crahan 1985.

172 Brenner et al. 2008, 8; Pérez 2015a, 283–285.

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The construction of the nation resonated interchangeably with the sociopolitical issues addressed by the revolution. The foundational sociopolitical visions and projects were mirrored against the mismanagement and problems of pre-1959 Cuba. The most crucial areas addressed by the revolution were the widespread poverty and the uneven distribution of income, unemployment, the lack of access to education and healthcare, and illiteracy.<sup>173</sup> In the revolutionary fervor, the nation was built by every citizen also from within: women and children both acquired and were appointed roles alongside men in the revolutionary process. Although young men became the faces of the revolution,<sup>174</sup> the agency of women increased as the revolutionary movement led to the mobilization of women not only in the civic sphere but in political participation as well. Women also entered wage labor and assumed new positions and roles in previously male-dominated sectors of society.<sup>175</sup>

The revolution has recounted the history of gender equality in Cuba as liberation from above. However, as the government directed the course of women's liberation, it promoted more homogenous emancipation and imposed a top-down, centralized agenda on what constituted gender equality in the revolution.<sup>176</sup> Scholarship shows that women also acquired active agency and acted as subjects in the emancipation process. For instance, women became organized in the movements in defense of the revolution, solidarity with labor movements, and the economy of working-class women.<sup>177</sup> The associations reflected well the broader mobilization that took place in the revolutionary society: the creation of organizations and associations that provided channels for supporting the revolution and publicly affiliating to it in all sectors of labor and social life for Cubans of all age groups, classes, and races.

The revolution was for the children, proclaimed the government. As the revolutionary process aimed at building the future of the nation through children, education played a pivotal role: the institutional education system became central to the transferring the ideas of the revolution. The revolution sought to educate new generations of supporters; to influence the young generations to grow into and within the revolution.<sup>178</sup> Public education was also central with its spillover effects on other areas of social policy emphasized by the revolutionary government.<sup>179</sup> Casavantes Bradford points out the revolution's focus on children, calling it "the revolution's self-designation as the exclusive benefactor of the island's children" and concluding that "the legitimacy of the Castro regime relied on its close relationship with the island's youngest citizens."<sup>180</sup>

In the project of building the new *patria*, the government issued a campaign against racism, an issue faced particularly by Cubans of African origin, and the ideas of a nation without race were brought up by Castro as the legacy of José Martí.<sup>181</sup> A particular focus of Castro was the end of racial discrimination in employment and education. By 1961, the government declared that the campaign had succeeded in its aim of eliminating racism and discrimination.

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173 Castañeiras García 2013, 139–144.

174 Pérez 2015a, 246.

175 Padula & Smith 1985, 82–84; Pagés 2008, 311–315; Chase 2015, 105–107; Pérez 2015a, 292–293.

176 Chase 2015, 105–107; Pérez 2015a, 296.

177 Chase 2015, 106; Pérez 2015a, 292.

178 Guerra 2012, 138.

179 Castañeiras García 2013.

180 Casavantes Bradford 2014, 7.

181 de la Fuente 2001, 33, 260–263, 266; Benson 2016, 2–3, 30–31, 51–52, 120.

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According to historians Alejandro de la Fuente and Devyn Spence Benson, from there began a long silence about publicly acknowledging issues of race and racism that lasted until the 1990s.<sup>182</sup> Identifying these issues as spheres of silence in the revolution provides further insight into problematizing other persistent paradigms and silent areas in the revolution's self-appointed narratives.

During the first decades of the revolutionary rule, the government placed the socio-political programs in the frameworks of the revolution's ideological foundation. Ideologically, the grand shift of the revolution came with the declaration of the revolution's nature as socialist in 1961. From the beginning, several sectors and social cohorts in Cuban society, each with a contesting vision about the revolution, had suspected communist influence on the revolutionary process and its ideological foundation. Nevertheless, as argued by Louis A. Pérez, the revolution's "socialist character was apparently neither intrinsic to its original ideological content nor essential to its initial political ascendancy."<sup>183</sup> In the first years, the government had insisted on not committing to socialism; yet the State's political direction became increasingly invested in socialism and, ultimately, communism. The Constitution of 1976 finally defined Cuba as a socialist State of workers.<sup>184</sup>

From the changing visions of the revolution emerged the narrative of betrayal. Cubans more moderate in their vision of reform, many of whom had participated in the insurrection against Batista and supported Castro's revolution, felt betrayed by the new direction and the radical changes introduced by the revolutionary regime.<sup>185</sup> As many of them turned to oppose the revolution's course of action, they opted for leaving the country at the early stages of the revolutionary process. From their perception emerged the exile-narrative of betrayal caused by the revolution turning against its origins, fostered particularly among the Cuban community in the United States. According to Guerra, the betrayal narrative has dominated "most of the literature, memoirs, and journalistic accounts produced by exiles."<sup>186</sup>

At the core of the revolution's anthropological idea was a socialist humanist vision highlighting the human being's ability to discard individualism and selfishness in favor of social conscience for the good of society. In Cuba, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, in particular, was appointed a role as the creator of the new morals and ideals of humanity in the revolution under the vision introduced as the New Man.<sup>187</sup> The Constitution of 1976 defined materialistic atheism as the philosophical framework of the revolution after it was assumed with the employment of communism.<sup>188</sup> The evolution of the revolution's ideas shows that, in essence, the revolution was not stagnant: it proved dynamic as it went through a series of changes. From early on, simultaneously with the changes in policies, structures, and circumstances, also the philosophical framework of the revolutionary process began to evolve.

In the course of the revolution, change sometimes occurred erratically, shifting the revolutionary process to unprecedented directions and proceeding unsteadily.<sup>189</sup> The

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182 de la Fuente 2001, 274–275, 279–280; Benson 2016, 2–3, 30–31, 51–52.

183 Pérez 2015a, 262.

184 Castañeiras García 2013.

185 Torres 2001, 49; Brenner et al. 2008, 9.

186 Guerra 2012, 8.

187 Brenner et al. 2008, 12.

188 Constitución 1976.

189 Mesa-Lago 1978, ix; Pérez 2015a, 268.

occasionally sporadic nature of the process has made the revolution difficult to define. Damián J. Fernández, among others, has pointed out the elusiveness of the Cuban revolution as a concept used in scholarship to address the stages of various socio-political and economic episodes on the island after 1959, although it is clear that the episodes have not been monolithic. Part of the elusiveness is the relation between continuity and change in the revolution.<sup>190</sup> Throughout the decades, the revolution engaged in self-criticism and emphasized self-reflection as a means to improvement. While claiming legitimacy based on history,<sup>191</sup> the revolution also evolved as it experienced both successes and failures. The Cuban government, Fidel Castro at the forefront, was critical of its actions, frequently announcing changes to revoke past errors, and highlighted reflection as one of the key qualities of the revolution.<sup>192</sup> The dynamic quality suggested that in Cuba, the revolution established a continuous process of self-reflection and self-definition through its own narrative discourse.

### *The Grand Narrative of the Revolution*

In the early 1960s, the images of Fidel Castro and his revolutionary comrades became well-known pieces of history around the world. They captured the attention and imagination of generation after generation in a variety of historical, social, and political contexts. They included images of Fidel speaking to euphoric masses, young men holding rifles among joyous citizens—all with smiles on their faces—and Cubans participating in the revolutionary process as their civic duty.<sup>193</sup> These visual representations came to symbolize the revolution: in these images, the “age of revolutionary innocence that fostered the Cuban revolution” was both captured and frozen in time.<sup>194</sup>

Historian Lillian Guerra links this well-known imaginary to “the grand narrative of the revolution:” a narrative created by the revolutionary government and the State to strengthen the revolution’s claim for legitimacy and power. Established at the early stages of the revolution, the narrative emphasized the revolution as Cuba’s now-fulfilled destiny and built on the unconditional support of the people to the revolution.<sup>195</sup> Developed further, the grand narrative aimed at creating a coherent, all-encompassing story of the revolution that all Cubans would participate in, a discursive paradigm for the revolution. The ultimate purpose it served was the consolidation of the revolution and its leadership. The grand narrative was built through state-enforced policies: the control of media and absence of civil society, the culture of public manifestations, and the demand for mass-expressions of support for the revolution’s leadership. According to Guerra, the grand narrative was reinforced also by the role of the masses in creating the grand narrative through active participation in and repetition of the processes that were the initial introduction of the narrative.<sup>196</sup>

The grand narrative carried through the episodic course of the revolutionary process as a way to make sense of the revolution’s past within the discursive frameworks provided by the

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190 Fernández 1992, 2.

191 Pérez-Stable 2012, 128.

192 Mesa-Lago 1978, 28–29, 35, 65, 103; Pérez 2015a, 268.

193 Gaddis 2008, 148; Ching, Buckley & Lozano-Alonso 2007, 237–238; Casey 2009, 25–26.

194 Landau 2008, 41.

195 Guerra 2012, 9.

196 De La Torre 2003, 82; Guerra 2012, 133; Benson 2016, 24–25.

revolution. Historian Jennifer Lambe describes the production of Cuban history as “a paradigmatic exercise of revolutionary apotheosis, with officials crafting a narrative of the past to meet the political demands of the present.”<sup>197</sup> A part of seeing the revolution as a process was the construction of a collective memory to connect the changing episodes to the origins of the revolutionary process and its initial claim for legitimacy. The construction entailed a collective recognition of the most relevant unifying events of the revolution and a consensus on the symbolic roles appointed to the faces of the revolution, such as Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, Che Guevara, and Celia Sánchez, who also became common points of reference for revolutionary conviction and commitment.<sup>198</sup> As the role appointed to the faces of the revolution suggests, the revolutionary narrative placed a specific emphasis on the importance of a vanguard protecting the revolution. Fidel Castro and his revolutionary cohort, a group of individuals who were capable of leading the country with their revolutionary spirits and ideas, were portrayed as examples of an ideal revolutionary.<sup>199</sup> Some of them, such as Camilo Cienfuegos and Che Guevara, were transformed into legends in the revolutionary narrative after their death.

In distinguishing the revolutionary vanguard, the narrative appointed a pivotal role to Fidel Castro’s charismatic leadership. Castro dominated the grand narrative of the revolution simultaneously as its principal actor and creator, appearing as Cuba’s messianic leader with an exceptional vision of the course of the revolutionary process. Castro was a national hero, and through the widespread admiration of his personality, the grand narrative intertwined with *fidelismo*: the belief in the principles embodied by Fidel as the supreme leader. *Fidelismo* also transformed into a cultural religion with rites, credos, and moral principles. The inclusion of teleology also worked to present the revolution in a divine light, to give a sense of a miraculous apparition to the revolution’s fulfillment.<sup>200</sup> According to Guerra, the religious interpretation of *fidelismo* “endured in the landscapes, hearts, and homes of Cuba for many years.”<sup>201</sup>

In her criticism of the self-appointed narratives of the revolution, historian Michelle Chase calls the revolution’s *oficialista*<sup>202</sup> narrative a well-fitted, teleological notion of a revolutionary vanguard. According to Chase, at the core of the narrative—as its principal characters and creators—are the political leaders and intellectuals who seem to possess superior knowledge of the revolution and seem as if destined to lead the Cuban people.<sup>203</sup> However, as pointed out by Pérez-Stable, among others, the authority and power exercised by Castro and his vanguard did not occur in a vacuum. The leadership of the revolution received support from the citizens, which further legitimized the emphasis on the revolutionary vanguard in the grand

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197 Lambe 2017, 235.

198 Thomas-Woodward 2003.

199 Chase 2015, 5–6; Pérez 2015a, 251.

200 De La Torre proposes that there was a link between the centuries-old Latin American leadership form *caudillismo* and the Messianic role appointed to Fidel Castro. According to De La Torre, central to both is yielding full power to a supreme leader, thus enabling an authoritative and dictatorial leadership and the glorification of a larger-than-life leader. De La Torre 2003, 91. The role of the leadership in the revolutionary narrative is also discussed by Brenner et al. 2008, 8 and Guerra 2012, 149.

201 Guerra 2012, 148.

202 In this case, *oficialista* refers to the establishment imposing authority over citizens: a cohort of leaders and political or intellectual authorities, for instance, who participate in the definition and establishment of the official narrative of the government.

203 Chase 2015, 211–212. See also Sierra Madero 2016.

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narrative.<sup>204</sup> Nevertheless, the focus on the leadership left in its shadow the more multifaceted nature of power and popular support for the revolution.

In the grand narrative, ideal revolutionary citizenry and the loyalty of the Cuban people built the popular, uncontested support for the leadership. According to Guerra, the grand narrative entailed the admiration by the masses for those who participated in the guerrilla war, infused with a sense of guilt for not having participated in the revolutionary struggle themselves. As a way to atone for their absence, the masses had to publicly demonstrate their support and commitment to the revolution, simultaneously recognizing Fidel Castro's absolute, messianic authority as the revolution's supreme leader.<sup>205</sup> In the grand narrative, the obedience of the masses was a prerequisite for and a result of the victorious revolution. Thus, the narrative both stemmed from and helped to create the response of the people to the revolution.

The narrative also built on history and national myth-making to claim its legitimacy as the revolution was portrayed as the fulfillment of the aspirations and promises of the past. From this perspective, the established narrative of the revolution also built a bridge from the revolution's presence to Cuba's past before the year 1959. An essential element in the process was the role of José Martí in the revolution's ideology and imagination. As Martí was identified with the historical attempts of nation-building, an affiliation with him brought the revolution credibility regarding Cuba's past before the revolution. Martí's role as a national icon, a heroic and mythical figure of the fatherland, gave legitimacy to the revolution as Martí's ideological successor: Martí connected with nationalism and patriotism, which in turn were ideals assumed by the revolution. Thus, José Martí's vision of Cuba was portrayed as the vision of the revolution, and Fidel as the leader embodied the spirit of Martí.<sup>206</sup> Central to the use of history was a narrative of redemption: the revolution assuming responsibility for redeeming the shortcomings and failures in the long-lasting desire of fulfilling Cuba's potential and promises.<sup>207</sup>

The revolution's grand narrative became closely related to the historiography of the revolution. It served for establishing continuity with suitable elements of the historical past, connecting the revolution to the past, and drawing legitimacy from the historical continuum of Cuba's story. Historian Louis A. Pérez writes on the construction of Cuban historiography<sup>208</sup> at the early stage of establishing and consolidating the revolution's legitimacy:

In Cuba, new versions of the past were summoned to serve new visions of the future. The consolidation of the Revolution required not only reordering Cuba as it was known but also revising Cuba as it was remembered. The two were connected in vital and organic ways. History became the means by which to repudiate the past from which the Revolution sought release and validate the future to which the revolution aspired: in music, in cinema, in literature, but most of all in historiography.<sup>209</sup>

Pérez argues that the new interpretation of Cuba's past forged a complex entanglement of the revolution's historiography, its grand narrative, and the scholarly study of the revolution. As

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204 Pérez-Stable 1991.

205 Guerra 2012, 5–6.

206 Valdés 2008, 31; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 1; Benson 2016, 2, 9–13; López 2016, 265–267.

207 Pérez 2015a, 246, 248.

208 For an analysis of Cuban historiography and the interpretations of the past in Cuban national identity, see Pérez 2013.

209 Pérez 1992, 56.



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scholars have often directed their attention to the issues and topics raised by the revolution,<sup>210</sup> they have contributed to selectively drawing further attention on specific aspects of the revolution's self-understanding. The historiography of the revolution has also framed scholarly work on pre-revolutionary Cuba, as the scholarly tendency of seeing the pre-1959 history in the light of the revolution also gave the revolution legitimacy and ownership to make Cuba's past the revolution's history.<sup>211</sup>

The creation of the grand narrative was a highly selective process with consequences on policy-making and the boundaries of behavior and expression in everyday life. Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion emerged from and were legitimized with it: what was included in the grand narrative became acceptable and what was left out of it became marginalized, unpopular, and outright unacceptable. In her work, Hatzky suggests that as the Cuban government and military remained the sole interpreters of the revolution's officially constructed history, they were "free to categorize the protagonists as either 'good' or 'evil'."<sup>212</sup> From forming these categories, it was a short way to including in the public narrative an imperative for the citizens to act according to them. Elements excluded from the grand narrative—people, social cohorts, and institutions—found themselves defined as counterrevolutionaries while Castro demanded Cubans to align with the revolution entirely and unconditionally.

As the historical dimension of the revolutionary narrative suggests, the revolution was seen by many on the island as the culmination of a historical continuum, the ultimate fulfillment of past aspirations and struggles. However, for others, the revolution represented the state of the radically new, a break with the past. The year 1959 marked either the culmination of a long process or the beginning of a new one—or simultaneously both. In the historiography crafted by the revolution itself, these two interpretations came together: the revolution was both a continuum of Cuba's long fight for freedom from oppression and a beginning for a new era of renewed freedom.<sup>213</sup> The narrative underscored the nature of the revolution as a process: a dynamic and inevitable, unalterable course of Cuban history.<sup>214</sup>

The revolution was able to sustain the critical elements of the grand narrative through the decades that brought changes to Cuba's domestic and foreign politics, economy, and social structures. From a historical perspective, the grand narrative of the revolution made it possible to build a narrative of continuous success. Hatzky, among other scholars, refers to this telling of history as an "ideologically charged discourse that still portrays - - the official success story of the Cuban Revolution."<sup>215</sup> Hatzky also refers to Cuba's "official politics of memory," the power of the authorities to define what belongs to the narrative framework of the revolution's history and what is excluded from it.<sup>216</sup>

Success and faith in the revolutionary process were foundational for the revolution's self-understanding. Another crucial dimension of the narrative was the distinction between human errors made in the administration and the ideological core of the revolution as defined by the

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210 Pérez 1992, 66.

211 Pérez 1992, 56.

212 Thomas-Woodard 2003; Hatzky 2015, 8.

213 Valdés 2008, 31–33; Pérez 2015a, 237–243.

214 Hamilton 2012, 13; Pérez 2015a, 249.

215 Thomas-Woodard 2003; Hatzky 2015, 8. See also Sierra Madero 2016.

216 Hatzky 2015, 8.

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leadership of the revolution. It was thus possible to maintain the core of the narrative of the revolution's legitimacy from the early 1960s through the 1980s: although the revolution faced exhaustive obstacles and changes, the teleological meaning-making of the revolution resisted temporal circumstances. The ultimate story remained focused on the success of the revolutionary process, and the narrative of heroism and victory became internationally recognized as well, enduring in global imagination as a representation of Cuba.<sup>217</sup> Consequently, the histories challenging the revolution's claim for success and popularity were, for a long time, left aside and treated as non-existent both on the island as well as in the views on Cuba from afar.

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<sup>217</sup> De La Torre 2003, 26; Quiroga 2005, 31; Ching, Buckley & Lozano-Alonso 2007, 237–238; Benson 2016, 24.

### III THE TIME OF CONTESTATION: 1959–1961

#### 1. A Catholic Fatherland

Cuban Catholics were swept up into the revolution as swiftly as anyone on the island in January 1959.<sup>1</sup> In its early days, a revolution filled with the promise of bringing forth a much-needed change was not only deemed the best course of action—after claiming victory, it seemed to be the only desired framework. As the thrill of revolution spilled over onto the streets of Cuba's cities and villages, it filled people with a sense of hope. The hype that had begun with the glorified days of guerrilla warfare of Castro's revolutionaries and had culminated in the joyful arrival of the troops in the capital of Havana soon washed over the entire nation. Even though the first months of the revolution's victory coincided with the beginning of the Lenten season, and Catholics were urged to enter into the season without excessive frolicking and showing appropriate piety,<sup>2</sup> it did little to dim the excitement. The revolution and Fidel Castro as a national hero enjoyed overwhelming support from Cubans, and both the institutional Church and most Catholics became immersed in the revolutionary moment.<sup>3</sup>

In the beginning, it was logical for Catholics in Cuba to support the revolution. In early 1959, Cubans were not Catholics *or* revolutionaries—many of them were both. When the revolution begun by Fidel Castro triumphed in January 1959, it was possible for Cubans to be simultaneously religious and revolutionary.<sup>4</sup> In the early days of the revolution, Catholics were not only Catholics; they were Catholics among other identities, such as revolutionaries, active citizens, and Cubans. Lay Catholics were also husbands and wives, daughters and sons, workers and students; they represented a cross-section of individual Cubans, some whom fostered strong identities as Catholics, some of whom went to church occasionally. Many of them were urban, middle-class white Cubans.<sup>5</sup> Apart from such persons, a specific group of Catholics were in the ordained ministry or had joined religious orders; for them, Catholicism was a defining matter of identity and self. In early 1959, the revolution was an acceptable option for many of them as well, as it echoed a change that the Catholic Church also acknowledged as a much-needed development on the island.<sup>6</sup>

From early on, the revolutionary narrative emphasized the active support of the Catholic Church for the revolution by highlighting the presence of Cuban Catholics in the revolutionary struggle.<sup>7</sup> Lay Catholics participated in the fights; Catholics joined the urban resistance of middle-class Cubans in the island's largest cities; laypeople were part of the movement not because they were Catholics, but because they were Cubans invested in bringing about a

1 Vida Nueva 3.1.1959; BLPE Enero 1959, Num.1 Acción Católica Cubana Junta Nacional; Interview 1; Interview 4; Interview 28.

2 AHAH AC JN COL Secretariado de Religión y Moralidad: Circular No. 5 Enero de 1959; AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 15 Sr. Presidente de la Junta Parroquial 2/1959.

3 Tweed 1997, 24–25; Conde 1999, 2–4; de la Fuente 2001, 259; Pedraza 2007, 56–57; Brenner et al. 2008, 8; Guerra 2012, 11; Pérez 2015a, 247.

4 BLPE Enero 1959, Num.1 Acción Católica Cubana Junta Nacional; Interview 4; Schmidt 2015, 185–186.

5 The racial and socio-economic composition of Catholics as white, middle- and upper-middle-class urban Cubans belongs to the established scholarly knowledge on Catholicism in the first years of the revolution. See, for instance, Crahan 1985.

6 Interview 1; Interview 4; Interview 11; Interview 22; Interview 26; Interview 27.

7 Fidel y la religión 1985, 157–174, 191–193.

### III THE TIME OF CONTESTATION: 1959–1961

revolution.<sup>8</sup> Particularly well-known and often mentioned examples were the Catholics priests, although few, who had joined the guerrilla troops and participated in the fights as revolutionaries. Alongside them, the guerrilla fighters had been seen as having received God's blessing and enjoyed the support of the faithful.<sup>9</sup> Photographs documenting the revolutionary struggle portrayed guerilla troops with rosaries and images of Cuba's patron saint, Our Lady of Charity (*Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre*),<sup>10</sup> helping build Fidel Castro's authority as the supreme leader in consolidating the revolution. The early images of the revolution pictured Castro in a Messiah-like setting at political rallies and public demonstrations, celebrating the people's support.<sup>11</sup>

The institutional church expressed its support for the revolution in words and deeds. In the Cathedral of Havana, prominent members of the ecclesial hierarchy, Catholic associations, and a large number of laypeople came together with members of the new revolutionary regime and rebel army, participating in a Mass offered for "the eternal rest of those who fell in the fight for liberty," and to give thanks for the long-awaited peace and harmony of the fatherland.<sup>12</sup> Cuban bishops issued public statements and pastoral letters congratulating Fidel Castro and offering their approval for the change of regime.<sup>13</sup> Even Pope John XXIII acknowledged the revolution: his message to Cuba, delivered by Cardinal Arteaga on January 4, 1959 was a call for peace, fraternal concord, and national prosperity through God's intermediation—in the revolution.<sup>14</sup> The revolutionary process was also placed in the hands of *La Virgen de La Caridad*, a nationally recognized object of devotion with historically profound significance as a maternal figure for all Cubans.<sup>15</sup>

Behind the triumphant euphoria and early inclusiveness of Catholicism in the revolution, the course of the revolution remained a mystery in the early stages of Castro's rule. The ideological and political foundation of the revolution was not yet fully defined: a dominant narrative of its legitimacy was derived from nationalistic, patriotic ideals connected with the island's past.<sup>16</sup> In Cuban history, the revolution was interpreted as both a continuum and an interruption: a culmination point in the long line of Cuban struggles for independence and autonomy, and a marker of new history in a previously unforeseen context.<sup>17</sup> During this early period, termed "the messy phase" and "the revolutionary moment,"<sup>18</sup> the direction of the revolution was not clear in any sense of the word; in fact, there was not even one distinct, clearly defined revolution but several visions attempting to obtain power and impose authority over others. The period was thus marked by power struggles, shifting dynamics, and a multitude of

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8 Vida Nueva 3.1.1960; Holbrook 2009; Guerra 2012, 37; Chase 2015, 7.

9 AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 15 Sr. Presidente de la Junta Parroquial 2/1959; Fidel y la religión 1985, 194.

10 In English, Our Lady of Charity. In Cuba, the Virgin is also known as *La Virgen de la Caridad*, *La Virgen Mambisa*, and *Cachita*. For a Cuban history of the Virgin, see Peña, Valcárcel & Ángel Urbina 2014.

11 Fidel y la religión 1985, 194; Pérez 2010, 249; Schmidt 2015, 190–191.

12 BLPE Enero 1959, Num.1 Solemne Misa por los Caídos y Te-Deum de Acción de Gracias en la Catedral de La Habana.

13 For instance, Vida Nueva 3.1.1959.

14 BLPE Enero 1959, Num.1 Mensaje del Papa a Cuba 4.1.1959.

15 AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 17 4/1959.

16 Pérez 2015a, 246–248, 253.

17 Fernández 2000, 92.

18 Chase 2015, 6.

### III THE TIME OF CONTESTATION: 1959–1961

contradictory voices challenging each other in search of revolutionary rule.<sup>19</sup>

In the contest for ownership of the revolution, Catholics considered the Church to be in a position to comment on and influence the direction of the revolutionary process as one of the historically stable, traditional voices on the island.<sup>20</sup> At the heart of the Church's legitimacy was the nature of Cubans as an inherently Catholic people: ecclesial authorities considered themselves to represent the majority of Cubans as Catholics, using the voice of the majority as leverage to participate in the discourse on the revolutionary process.<sup>21</sup> The rebirth of *patria* was evoked with patriotism and Christian principles.<sup>22</sup> These discourses concur with Crahan's argument that in Cuba, religious beliefs "influenced concepts of polity and society, as well as Cubans' involvement in civil society," resulting also in religion having a prominent role in how the revolutionary polity and society were conceptualized.<sup>23</sup>

From this perspective, the Church saw no other option for Cuba but to be Catholic. Thus, the act of projecting Catholic social doctrine<sup>24</sup> onto the revolution's ideas became intertwined with emphasizing the national character of the revolutionary process. Both the Church and the revolutionary regime discussed the idea of building the Cuban *patria*; both insisted on building on the history of the nation, its potential and aspirations. For the Church, Catholicism was an inscribed prerequisite of the *patria*: there was no other option for the revolution but to build on the Christian legacy of Cuban society. The new *patria* was to be Catholic.

The episcopate expressed the Church's vision of and expectations for the revolution through alignment with Catholic social doctrine, arguing that the aims of the revolution and the teachings of the Catholic Church were mutually inclusive and corresponding. While the episcopate refrained from directly addressing politics and economics, it emphasized the social dimension of the revolutionary process as a particular interest of the Church. At the same time, the bishops suggested that their foremost concerns were those directly affecting the life of the Church as an institution and the wellbeing of the faithful.<sup>25</sup> Lay Catholics approached the issue more straightforwardly: social doctrine was inscribed in Catholic thought; it was not possible to be Catholic without social awareness. The revolution provided a context for fulfilling the missionary dimension of social Catholicism.<sup>26</sup> This concurs with De La Torres's argument that socially conscious Catholics "saw the Revolution as the vehicle through which they could put

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19 Guerra 2012, 56–67; Benson 2016, 21.

20 BLPE Enero 1959, Num.1 Enrique, Arzobispo de Santiago de Cuba 3.1.1959; BLPE Enero 1959, Num.1 Acción Católica Cubana Junta Nacional; AHAH AC JD C Mujeres de Acción Católica Cubana, Junta Diocesana, Cienfuegos: Circular Abril 1959; Vida Nueva 3.1.1959; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 73.

21 Al Pueblo de Cuba 18.2.1959; La Iglesia Católica y La Nueva Cuba 31.5.1959.

22 AHAH AC CD Masculino Circular No. 35 por Julio Castaños de Villiers 1/1959; La Iglesia Católica y La Nueva Cuba 31.5.1959.

23 Crahan 2008, 331.

24 Catholic social doctrine refers to the normative teaching by the *magisterium* of the Catholic Church, which usually refers to the pope and the bishops exercising their authority to officially speak for the Church, addressing fundamental moral questions of persons and their social nature. According to Brady, the focus of the doctrine is "the relationship between Christian morality (virtues, rules, and ideals) and the concrete social patterns, practices, and institutions within which persons live." In this manner, Catholic social doctrine addresses "work and politics, culture and economics, and the general social structures of communities." Brady 2008, 1–3, 8–9; According to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Catholic social teaching is "aimed at guiding people's behavior" in a normative manner. CSDC#73; *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41: AAS 80

25 For instance, Vida Nueva 3.1.1959; El justo medio 29.1.1959; La enseñanza privada 13.2.1959; La Iglesia Católica y La Nueva Cuba 31.5.1959; La reforma agraria y el arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba 21.7.1959.

26 AHAH AC JD LH Parroquia, comunidad viviente y misionera 3/1959.

their faith in action.”<sup>27</sup>

Drawing from Pope Leo XII’s teachings on social justice,<sup>28</sup> Cuban bishops placed expectations on the revolution to improve the conditions of the poor and the working class. Maintaining the Catholic teaching on natural law as the decisive authority accounting for a recognition of divine order, and religiousness as a natural condition of mankind’s creation, the Church insisted that the revolution commit itself to creating Christian social order and morality.<sup>29</sup> The Church invited the revolution to create a *patria* in which Catholic faith was professed both privately and publicly through active participation of the Church in society. This included, for instance, Catholic education and instruction for children and maintaining the sanctity of marriage and family as per Catholic doctrine.<sup>30</sup>

The Church suggested that the new regime was to both acknowledge the divine order and subordinate itself to such an order.<sup>31</sup> In Latin America, the tradition of colonial Catholicism had entailed the principle of a close union between the State and citizenry in religious preferences: if the majority of the citizens were Catholics, the State had a moral duty to profess and promote the Catholic faith as well as defend it in public life. Behind the principle lay the ideal of the State’s pursuit of truth, which the Catholic Church was considered to possess.<sup>32</sup> This historical nexus was reconsidered during the revolution. David Tombs proposes that, more generally, the Cuban revolution served as a catalyst for Latin American Catholicism to engage with modernity, awakening the institution to realize its own disengagement in the lives of the people and the power of a revolution to mobilize masses by the promise of change. This perceived threat, according to Tombs, led the institutional church to fear a loss of hegemony and social influence.<sup>33</sup>

In Cuba, the clergy strongly believed that they were obliged to participate in the restructuring of the country. In March 1959, a group of eight priests<sup>34</sup> in Havana published an open letter in the pro-Catholic, right-wing newspaper *Diario de la Marina*, affirming the Church’s commitment to the revolutionary process and the significance of the Church’s participation in building a new society. The leader of the group, Havana’s young diocesan priest Eduardo Boza Masvidal, went on to appear on national television as “one of the Cuban priests that stand out the most in civic resistance” prior to the revolution.<sup>35</sup> The clerics’ stance was also recognized by the government: after the discussion, Boza Masvidal met with the Cuban minister of education, Armando Hart.<sup>36</sup>

The revolution, as stated by the clerics, needed the support of the Church to fulfill its

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27 De La Torre 2003, 28.

28 *Rerum Novarum* 15.5.1891.

29 Vida Nueva 3.1.1959; El justo medio 29.1.1959.

30 AHAH AC JN COF Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana: La Familia Cristiana; Vida Nueva 3.1.1959; Al Pueblo de Cuba 18.2.1959; La enseñanza privada 13.2.1959.

31 Vida Nueva 3.1.1959.

32 O’Malley 2008, 212.

33 Tombs 2002, 73.

34 The eight priests who signed the letter were Angel V. Fernández, Benito Avila Romero, Diego Madrigal, Fernando Prego, Luis Pérez, Eduardo Boza Masvidal, Armando E. Jiménez Rebollar, Cipriano J. Laria, Orlando Fernández, and Nelson Fernández.

35 Uno de los sacerdotes cubanos que más sobresalió en la resistencia cívica. DM 8.3.1959 Gran concentración católica celebraron jóvenes estudiantes; DM 8.3.1959 Sacerdotes cubanos al programa de la ACU en televisión; DM 8.3.1959 Urbi et Orbi; DM 5.4.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

36 DM 11.3.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

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moral promise. “The grand lines of the revolution and its future projections include fundamental Christian principles,”<sup>37</sup> declared the priests. Following the arguments of the episcopate, the priests argued that dignity and equality of all human beings, respect for life, the integrity and liberty of individuals, and social justice were among the shared values of the revolution and Catholicism. According to the priests, the most urgent tasks of the revolution were the creation of jobs for the unemployed, a more just distribution of land, and the restructuring of governance and administration. The Church lent its support and assistance to all these proposals because the project corresponded to the spirit of the gospel and social doctrine of the Catholic Church.<sup>38</sup>

Yet the support of the Church was a matter of negotiation and a mutual exchange of interests. The priests seemed to suggest that the Church would commit itself to cooperation if, in return, it would have the right to host Catholic private schools affirmed by the State. Already aware of the possibility of conflict, the priests emphasized the importance of maintaining national unity and avoiding polemic confrontations. “Not in any moment has it been the spirit of the Church to create difficulties for the government, nor to sow religious divisions among the Cubans, but to simply use the right of expression that exists in a democratic country,”<sup>39</sup> they wrote. Concluding the statement, the priests again affirmed the commitment of the Church to the revolution, yet with a subtle tone of caution. Although the Church was to support the revolution, it was to do so for the good of the nation, as an act of patriotism:

Us Catholics want, more than no one else, a close union of all Cubans, and to offer our most enthusiastic collaboration with our rulers, which does not impede us from giving constructive criticism when it is necessary, which the government itself should be most interested in. - - For this reason, we find it necessary, leaving personal attacks and unfruitful polemics aside, to devote ourselves to the arduous work that the fatherland requires, most of all of collaboration, serenity and patriotism.<sup>40</sup>

Insisting on building the new *patria*, the priests portrayed a more progressive stance to the inclusion of Catholicism in the revolution. These examples show that within the Church, there was not just one vision of the Church engaging with the revolution—there were, in fact, several perspectives on whether the Church should engage at all. In early 1959, it was still possible for Cubans to be both revolutionaries and Catholics—and that this was, in fact, the case in daily life for many of the militant Catholics<sup>41</sup> and revolutionaries. At the same time, and together with the voices of the episcopate and clergy, the Church officially continued to accept and cooperate with the revolution, but on its own terms. In return for such approval, the Church

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37 Los grandes lineamientos de la Revolución y sus proyecciones futuras envuelven principios fundamentales cristianos. DM 7.3.1959 Piden los sacerdotes cubanos cesen polémicas infecundas.

38 DM 7.3.1959. Piden los sacerdotes cubanos cesen polémicas infecundas.

39 En ningún momento ha sido el ánimo de la Iglesia poner dificultades al Gobierno ni crear divisiones religiosas entre los cubanos, sino sencillamente hacer uso del derecho que le asiste en un país democrático de exponer sus ideas. DM 7.3.1959. Piden los sacerdotes cubanos cesen polémicas infecundas.

40 Los católicos queremos más que nadie una unión muy estrecha entre todos los cubanos y prestar nuestra más entusiasta colaboración a nuestros gobernantes, lo cual no impide que podamos hacer cuanto sea necesario una crítica constructiva que el propio Gobierno debe ser el más interesado en que se le haga. Para esto creemos necesario que, dejando a un lado ataques personales y polémicas infecundas, nos consagremos todos a la ardua labor que la patria reclama, en alto plano de colaboración, de serenidad y de patriotismo. DM 7.3.1959 Piden los sacerdotes cubanos cesen polémicas infecundas.

41 In Cuban Catholicism in the 1960s, *militante* usually referred to lay members of Catholic Action. In November 1959, a militant was defined by the women of Catholic Action as an active member of the organization, conscious of her role and duties, and actively following the program of Catholic Action with zeal and a sense of purpose. AHAH AC JN JF Explicación de la Moción VIII Asamblea Nacional y Concentración Noviembre 27–28 de 1959.

expected the revolution to commit itself to the principles, values, and morality of Christianity.

## 2. Ecclesial Mass Mobilization

In the euphoria of the revolutionary process and the mass mobilization of the people that ensued, the year 1959 became the golden age of Catholic lay activism in Cuban civil society. While the time was marked by uncertainty in the course of the revolutionary process, for the Church the first year of the revolution was still a time of relative stability in terms of maintaining activity and public visibility. Some of the activities were in fact resumed after a break: many of the Catholic associations had been forced to suspend their activities during the fight against Batista and the circumstances of ongoing guerilla war.<sup>42</sup> Thus the establishment of revolutionary rule also represented a time of peace and gave the associations the chance to resume their activities.

In local communities, the revolution did not alter the course of ecclesial life. Through the year 1959, both urban and rural communities in Cuba were able to celebrate the Mass and host their events in regular order: dwelling in the public sphere did not disturb the celebrations following the liturgical calendar of the Church—religious practices carried on without disruptions to their continuity despite the changing Cuban landscape.<sup>43</sup> The Church pursued continuous activities in urban and rural settings alike: Havana, Pinar del Río, Cienfuegos, Matanzas, Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey, Artemisa, Ciego de Avila, Holguín, Bayamo, Manzanillo, Sagua la Grande, Sancti Spiritus—in each providence of the country, the Church was present and operating.<sup>44</sup>

Cuban newspapers in their ecclesial calendars suggest that apart from Masses, services organized by and for laypeople were also still part of the Church's public domain in 1959. Masses of thanksgiving and requiems for the deceased belonged to the laity's daily practices of religion in a similar manner as public manifestations of receiving sacraments, such as the first communion. Likewise, Catholic baptisms, confirmation, ordinations into the ministry, and matrimonies were printed in Catholic newspapers as public announcements. Requiem for the deceased were organized and announced in newspapers as public events. As an expression of the Church's public domain, parishes and Catholic associations organized seminars, lectures, and debates on a large scale of theological and ecclesial matters.<sup>45</sup> The Church also remained a visible actor in civil society, reaching into spheres of professional and civic life through clubs,

42 For instance, AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 15, Febrero 1959; AHAH AC JN COL Julio Morales Gómes and Esther García Robés to Martha Sowers 8.6.1959; DM 12.4. Acto Lasallista.

43 AHAH AC CD Masculino Consejo Diocesano de la Habana 3/1959: Comuniones rotatorias de marzo; AHAH AC CD Masculino Circular #28 por Julio Casteños Villiers 1.6.1959; AHAH AC JN COL Informe del Secretariado de Religión y Piedad 20.7.1959; AHAH AC JN JF Informe a la Junta Nacional, Juventud Femenina Acción Católica; AHAH AC JN COC Informe del Centro de Orientación Cinematográfica de Diciembre 1959; BLPE Enero-Abril 1961, Misiones Parroquiales: Labor misional de los PP. Paules desde el centro de La Habana en el curso de 1959–1960; DM 8.3.1959 Urbi et Orbi; DM 14.3.1959 Jornada misional sacramentina en Arroyo Apolo; DM 14.3.1959 Cursillo intensivo de Servicio Social; DM 28.9.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

44 For instance, AHAH AC JD M Situación de los consejos diocesanas de Matanzas, julio de 1959; AHAH AC JD M América Penichet to Antonio Bechile 31.7.1959; AHAH AC JM SN Plan de Actividades Julio a Noviembre de 1959.

45 DM 11.3.1959 Misa Mañana por la Sra. Manuela Alonso; DM 13.3.1959 Misa de Réquiem; DM 1.4.1959 Virgen de Loreto; DM 2.4. Reuniones de los viernes en el salón La Milagrosa; DM 2.4. Federación de la Juventud Masculina de Acción Católica Cubana; DM 3.4.1959 En la catedral de Matanzas fue la Boda Aguirre-Ramos; DM 9.4.1959 Coopere al engrandecimiento de Cuba. Ayude a formar mejores cristianos; DM 28.8.1959 Vigilias de la adoración para el próximo mes.



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associations, and recreational groups.<sup>46</sup> Catholic schools and colleges resumed their work without interruptions.<sup>47</sup> Even new chapels were built and inaugurated.<sup>48</sup> On television and radio, spiritual programs proceeded without interruptions.<sup>49</sup>

These records, together with the diocesan archival records, show that there was no decrease in attendance and activity of the laypeople regarding Mass and receiving the sacraments.<sup>50</sup> Photographs on the pages of the newspapers attest to churches with full attendance during Masses and celebrations of an extraordinary nature.<sup>51</sup> Also, social gatherings and association meetings of Catholic groups, family celebrations, and lifespan rituals took place on a regular basis.<sup>52</sup> Published reports on the events also suggest that, from the urban upper-class laity's perspective, it was still considered socially acceptable and even desirable to proclaim public affiliation to the Church and demonstrate a personal commitment to and participation in ecclesial activities. Since these examples show that laypeople still participated in the Church in great numbers, they suggest that many of them found it possible to combine the Catholic faith and revolutionary politics. So too in the public sphere, it was possible to express open support for both the Church and the revolution.

While Catholic offices and lay organizations were able to convene regularly for their normal activities, they also placed considerable emphasis on events attempting to influence the revolutionary process and redirect the course of society. Local events grew in scale and reached the point of national recognition. In March 1959, the procession of Good Friday drew a crowd of 15,000 to the streets in the small town of Baracoa, in eastern Cuba, making it the largest religious event in the records of the town.<sup>53</sup> In September, Catholics celebrated the annual festivities of the island's patron saint, *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*. In a country that was in the middle of revolutionary restructuring, entourages from Havana were able to travel across the island to the sanctuary of El Cobre, where the effigy of the Virgin was on display.<sup>54</sup> As the first nationwide devotional celebration of the year, El Cobre's gathering marked a public confession and celebration of faith that was consistent with the celebrations prior to the revolution, yet on a much grander and far-reaching scale—which also served as a wakeup call for the nation.

Acts of commemoration and thanksgiving served to emphasize the support of Catholics for the revolution. Masses and prayers for the souls of the victims of the preceding regime and martyrs of the revolution were organized by both local churches and lay individuals as expressions of approval and participation in the revolution.<sup>55</sup> In March 1959, thousands of

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46 For instance, DM 4.4.1959 Invitación de la JEC.

47 For instance, DM 4.4.1959 Solemne clausura del año centenario.

48 DM 1.4.1959 Inauguración de nueva capilla en Carralillo el día 4; DM 11.4.1959 Nueva capilla a la Virgen de la Merced.

49 AHAH AC JD LH Julio Morales Gómez to Ramiro Sánchez 4.4.1959.

50 For instance, ACOPR 1961.

51 For instance, DM 14.4.1959 Homenaje Eucarístico a Monsenor Alfredo Muller.

52 AHAH AC JF CDA XIV Asamblea y X Concentración Diocesana de Aspirantes 9.5.1959; AHAH AC CD Masculino Circular #28 por Julio Casteños Villiers 1.6.1959; DM 8.3.1959 En honor de la Patrona de la A. Vasco-Navarro.

53 DM 1.4.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

54 AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 22 Septiembre de 1959; DM 27.8.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

55 For instance, BLPE Enero 1959, Num.1 Acción Católica Cubana Junta Nacional; Oración por los difuntos 21.7.1959; DM 11.3.1959 Urbi et Orbi; DM 13.3.1959 Urbi et Orbi; DM 13.3. Honras fúnebres; DM 3.4.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

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Catholic students in Havana gathered to celebrate and commemorate the leaders of young Catholics who had participated in the revolutionary struggle, such as José Antonio Echeverría<sup>56</sup>. “It is necessary that us Catholics come together, not to be separated from anyone, but to integrate into the revolutionary process,” declared a former lay leader of Catholic Action’s section for young men during the event.<sup>57</sup> Havana’s newly appointed auxiliary bishop, Evelio Díaz Cía, also delivered a service for the souls of all members of *Juventud Católica*, the association for young Catholic laity, who had fallen in combat during the revolution. The fallen leaders were honored on the same occasion as their remains were moved to their respective location by delegations of clergy and lay members of Catholic Action.<sup>58</sup>

In the town of Cárdenas, a similar event of commemoration was organized as a Mass and a pilgrimage to Echeverría’s gravesite on the anniversary of his death. The Holy See’s apostolic nuncio to Cuba, Luis Centoz, presided at the service. The local bishop, Alberto Martín Villaverde, participated in the event as one among many notable revolutionary leaders, army officials, and representatives of the revolutionary government. They were also joined by Prime Minister Fidel Castro in the course of the celebration.<sup>59</sup> On this occasion, the spirit of martyrdom—recognized in Christian and revolutionary tradition alike—the sense of fulfilling the revolution’s early promises, and Catholicism all seemed to coexist and correspond to the same commemoration. “This religious event recalls, honors, and glorifies those who gave the Cuban flag the magnificent color of their blood,” preached Martín Villaverde in his homily.<sup>60</sup>

In an event of similar nature, teachers at one of Havana’s Catholic private schools honored the memory of the teachers who had fought in the revolutionary struggle.<sup>61</sup> In Havana, the local council of Catholic Action for the parish of *San Judas y San Nicolás* organized a procession with the intention of giving thanks for the newly-gained liberty and offering prayers for the consolidation of peace in Cuba.<sup>62</sup> In April, a group of revolutionaries gave an offering in a requiem for the deceased young revolutionaries to mark the anniversary of an attack on Mercaderes Street, in Havana. The service was organized in the local church located near the site of the accident.<sup>63</sup>

Paying direct intention to the future of the revolutionary process, mostly in the capital city of Havana, lay organizations facilitated discourse on Catholicism in the revolution.<sup>64</sup>

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56 José Antonio Echeverría was the leader of *Directorio Revolucionario*, an anti-Batista organization founded in 1955 by the members of the *Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios*, that formed a coalition with Fidel Castro’s M-26-7 in 1956. Echeverría was killed in an attack on the presidential palace in Havana in 1957. As a lay Catholic leader, Echeverría has represented Catholic martyrdom in the revolutionary insurrection. According to Holbrook, Echeverría’s death ultimately “deprived the revolution of a Catholic alternative.” Orozco & Bolívar 1998, 336–338; Torres 2001, 47, De La Torre 2002, 96; Holbrook 2009.

57 Es necesario que los católicos nos reunamos, no para separarnos de nadie, sino para integrarnos mejor en el proceso revolucionario. DM 8.3.1959 Gran concentración católica celebraron jóvenes estudiantes; DM 14.3.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

58 DM 9.4.1959 El acto de hoy; DM 10.4.1959 Misa en la Catedral por federaros inmolados.

59 DM 14.3.1959 Rinden en Cárdenas hermoso tributo en honor de Echeverría; DM 14.3.1959 Misa por el alma de José Antonio Echeverría.

60 Este acto religioso es para recordar, honrar y glorificar a los que le dieron a la Bandera de Cuba el color hermoso de su sangre. DM 14.3.1959 Rinden en Cárdenas hermoso tributo en honor de Echeverría.

61 DM 10.3.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

62 DM 10.3.1959 La procesión del domingo.

63 DM 3.4.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

64 DM 28.8.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

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Members of *Agrupación Católica Universitaria*, an association for Catholic university students, broadcasted on television a show focusing on the Catholic contribution to the revolutionary process.<sup>65</sup> The group also directed its attention to exploring the anticipated Agrarian Reform Law and its consequences for the country.<sup>66</sup> By organizing a public discussion under the theme “Communism for what purpose?” the students addressed the suspicion of communist influence on the revolution.<sup>67</sup> Another group of Catholic students, *Juvenil Estudiantil Católica*, announced a desire to organize their first national meeting in Havana in September 1959. When calling for delegates from each province and diocese to participate in the event, they highlighted its significance for both “the Church and the fatherland.” According to announcements on the meeting, the congress was expected to define the Catholic youth's stand on matters acute for the country.<sup>68</sup>

The Cuban representatives of the Piarist Order<sup>69</sup> organized a series of talks and discussions to explore the dimensions and consequences of the Agrarian Reform Law. Held at the college of the order, the talks were directed at the students of the school, as per request of their parents, and aimed at increasing the students' support of the reform.<sup>70</sup> In another Catholic college in Havana, *Carmelo y Praga* directed by the Carmelites,<sup>71</sup> the youth group of Catholic Action organized The Week of Social Studies. The events, intended for men only, included lectures on topics such as the Catholic Church and social justice, liberalism, socialism and communism, and the voice of the Popes vis-à-vis the problematics.<sup>72</sup> The national council of Catholic Action also announced that it had produced statements on the themes of human dignity and social order.<sup>73</sup> In the same fashion, *Caballeros Católicos de Cuba* offered an event focusing on the interpretation of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which was already in 1959 considered a pioneering papal document on Catholic social doctrine.<sup>74</sup>

It was the Catholic Church's general understanding that the course of events in Cuba required constant vigilance and participation from all Catholics—and from a Catholic perspective, it was both a duty and a responsibility to engage in social discourse and public life as Catholics.<sup>75</sup> Clergy and religious orders in Havana addressed numerous matters of social justice in, for instance, an exclusive workshop on Agrarian issues. Apart from the anticipated Agrarian Reform Law, the workshop discussed cooperation, technology, and the mission of the clergy in promoting social justice.<sup>76</sup> The National Council of Catholic Action launched a project to intensify lay Catholics' participation in projects of social justice, to engage in the life of communities at the grassroots level.<sup>77</sup> Joining the intensifying movements of Catholics in the revolutionary moment was the transcending spiritual presence of the island's patron saint: in

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65 DM 8.3.1959 Sacerdotes cubanos al programa de la ACU en televisión.

66 DM 4.4.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

67 DM 10.4.1959 Urbi et Orbi; DM 14.4.1959 Acto en La Milagrosa.

68 DM 27.8.1959 Noticias de la JEC.

69 The official name of the order is the Order of Poor Clerics Regular of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools.

70 DM 10.4.1959 Los PP. Escolapios divulgarán ventaja de la Reforma Agraria.

71 The official name of the order is the Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.

72 DM 12.4.1959 Semana de Estudios Sociales en la Parroquia del Carmen; DM 14.4.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

73 AHAH AC JN M Mensaje de la presidenta 8/1959.

74 DM 12.4.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

75 For instance, AHAH AC JN M Consejo Nacional Julio de 1959.

76 DM 14.4.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

77 AHAH AC CN JF Plan Misional y de Educación Fundamental 15.2.1959.

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September 1959, the festivity of *La Virgen de la Caridad* was expected to be celebrated nationwide with particular intensity and devotion.<sup>78</sup>

What the activities of Catholic movements and groups demonstrated was the willing agency of Catholic adults. Not just young adults participated in the movements; working-age and middle-aged Catholics joined the public discourse as well. Although the organizations hosted sub-groups for both men and women, the voices coming through and addressing the course of the revolution were predominantly male. In a revolution strongly orchestrated by young men,<sup>79</sup> the space of discourse was consequently open particularly to groups of young Catholic laymen. Similarly, among ordained ministry it was naturally the voices of men that echoed within the Church as the voices of authority: while representatives of the ecclesial hierarchy had already reached a mature age, the voices of young and middle-aged clergy also assumed prominence, particularly in Havana's urban parishes.

Religious women were not present at the tables of debate and public discourses on the revolutionary ideology. Archival sources portray women within the Church as being in service of spirituality and expressing religiosity in domestic spheres: catechesis, matrimonial and family counseling, visiting the sick, and acts of contemplation and meditation were reserved for laywomen.<sup>80</sup> While the ideal of Catholic womanhood was to serve as an "example of discipline and sacrifice,"<sup>81</sup> public political debates were a domain reserved for men—particularly young adults portrayed with a robust youthful energy and determination. Through such various activities, the publicly manifested Catholic interpretation of the revolution came to represent the voice of the Church as predominantly masculine.

The aim of these voices, which emerged from all national Catholic organizations in 1959, was clearly to demonstrate Catholic participation in the transition of Cuba's political and social spheres. Yet the voices from within the Church were not straightforwardly unanimous: they were nuanced in their approach and commitment to the revolution, and they offered competing visions of how the role of the Church in the new Cuba should evolve. The discourse also offered greater visibility for the Church and increasing its impact, causing the majority of laypeople to acknowledge the importance of Catholicism and its influence on the course of events—although the forms of acknowledgement did not always occur in a positive sense, contrary to the clergy's expectations.

Since the events were planned as collective experiences to bring together great numbers of Catholics, they were directed at the laity in particular, calling them to commit themselves to the Church and its teachings both personally and publicly. It was the beginning of a movement that would call Catholics to pledge their allegiance to the Church instead of to the revolution. Ultimately, the urge to organize public demonstrations of Catholic faith and commitment was an answer to the call demanding the Church to be present where the future of the homeland was to be defined.

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78 AHAH AC JN M Mensaje de la presidenta 8/1959.

79 Pérez 2015a, 246–247.

80 For instance, AHAH AC JN JF Centro de dirigentes diocesanas 1959; AHAH AC CN M Informe a la Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana 1959; AHAH AC JD LH Junta Diocesana de Acción Católica de La Habana: Secretariado de Ejercicios Espirituales; AHAH AC JN M Informe a la Junta Nacional Julio de 1959; AHAH AC JN M Mensaje de la presidenta 8/1959.

81 AHAH AC JN M Mensaje de la presidenta 8/1959.

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The social consciousness of the Cuban Church gained new strength as the first laws were passed under the new revolutionary regime. The restructuring of Cuban society and the economy began with the Agrarian Reform Law in early 1959, followed by waves of nationalization of property, education, and healthcare, and it concluded with the seizure of the free press and media in the radicalization of the revolution by 1961.<sup>82</sup> Following this development, the Church moved from support to a position of caution, and it grew increasingly critical<sup>83</sup> of the suspected communist influences on the revolutionary process.

Previous scholarly work has approached the tension in Church–State relations regarding the legislative process of the revolution predominantly from the perspective of the place of the institutional church in Cuba’s social, political, and economic structures.<sup>84</sup> The theological and ecclesiological foundations, responses, and implications of the changing landscape of Cuban society—the loss of material and hegemonic privileges for the Church, as scholarly work has often phrased the tension—have received less attention. Yet it was precisely the tradition and legacy of Catholic social doctrine connecting the Cuban Church to a continuum of thought independent from Castro’s revolution and its new legislation that served as a primary source of inspiration for the Church’s response to the revolutionary reforms.

The first major economic and social changes under revolutionary rule occurred with the introduction of the First Agrarian Reform Law in May 1959. Since the law transformed ownership on the island, it was supported by rural work forces and opposed by owners of land plantations and ranches.<sup>85</sup> Socio-politically, the law led to polarization within Cuban society, including the Church, which had historically portrayed itself as a church representing the interest of the owning class. The revolutionary reforms, aimed at transcending Cuba’s socio-political and economic landscape, revealed the demographic composition of the Church: the driving force of the Church were the primarily urban, white, and economically privileged laypeople. Likewise, the militantly laypeople themselves acknowledged their exceptional position: they were the face of the Church in Cuba, and with them the Church appeared as a historical representation of Cuba before the revolution.<sup>86</sup>

Initially, the Cuban episcopate officially voiced its support for the Agrarian Reform Law. Bishops approved of the reform and urged Catholics to support the actions taken by the government to increase the common good and to maintain the private rights of individuals through a Christian sense of justice and charity.<sup>87</sup> The hierarchy’s steadfast, even jubilant, support trickled down to the grassroots level: for instance, the Church of San Juan de Bosco, in the neighborhood of Vibora in Havana, contributed to the project by donating a tractor.<sup>88</sup> The

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82 Super 2003; Pérez 2015a, 252–263.

83 For example, a critical remark was made in July 1959, when the national board of Catholic Action discussed the creation of ICAIC (*Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográfica*): according to Catholic Action, the newly appointed director of the institute was “known for communist ideology.” AHAH AC JN Informe a la Junta Nacional Julio de 1959 por Secretariado de Orientación Cinematográfica.

84 See, for instance, Kirk 1989.

85 Pérez 2015a, 250–252.

86 AHAH ACC JD Conferencia pronunciada por la Dra. Esther García Robes, en la Segunda Asamblea de Juntas Parroquiales de la Zona Este, celebrada el 8 de Marzo de 1959. Parroquia de San Judas y San Nicolas.

87 Entrevista con Mons. Evelio Díaz 30.5.1959; La Reforma Agraria Cubana y La Iglesia Católica 5.7.1959 (Publicado en la Revista Bohemia); La reforma agraria y el arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba 21.7.1959; Guerra 2012, 94–95.

88 DM 11.4.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

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approval of the episcopate was justified with reference to the tradition of the Catholic social doctrine. The legitimacy of the reforms was founded in Catholic thought on the common good—yet the pursuit of it, as the bishops acknowledged, inevitably entailed sacrifices for some in the form of losing assets and property in favor of a more just distribution of wealth. Arguing in favor of this change, the episcopate emphasized the junction of Christianity and patriotism in building a nation for all Cubans: calling attention to the less privileged classes, even at the cost of the privileged.<sup>89</sup> The legitimacy of the Agrarian Reform Law was measured by its effects on people: in order for the revolution to fulfill its promises, as the bishops pressed, it had to improve the lives of Cuban peasants, the group most affected by inequality.<sup>90</sup>

Yet the bishops also commented on the potentially communist elements of the reform, expressing concern over the risk of eventually submitting land and labor to the State as an unavoidable result of the reforms.<sup>91</sup> Suspecting growing communist influence in the government, the Church began to contribute to the so-called betrayal narrative<sup>92</sup> regarding the evolving ideas of the revolution. According to the Church, “the enemies of the revolution” were those operating within it, but betraying its original vision and promises.<sup>93</sup> Issuing straightforward warnings against taking a communist route that “would not bring success to the revolution,” the bishops juxtaposed the Cuban revolution and communism, arguing for the separation and incompatibility of the two.<sup>94</sup> In this discourse, it is remarkable that Catholic social doctrine was still used as a potential watershed: intrinsically embedded in the ideas of the revolution, but starkly in contrast with communism, Catholicism would serve as an ideological marker in the evolving doctrine of the revolution.

Ambivalence about the ideology and course of the revolutionary process gripped the Church in the wake of the reforms: while the course of the revolution still remained unclear, the episcopate grew increasingly critical of what they perceived as communism.<sup>95</sup> Behind the criticism was the solid foundation of more than a hundred years of social teaching by the global Church. While the Church was certainly hit by the loss of wealth, it was hit also by what the episcopate saw as an attack on the principles of Catholicism and the Catholic faith. To this end, the hierarchy became invested in protecting the core of Catholic social doctrine: social order defined by natural law, individual’s rights and liberty, and the Church’s participation in civic life. Through Catholic social teaching, the episcopate evaluated the morality of the reforms.

The first reforms began to reveal the tones of intra-ecclesial discourse. Catholic opponents of the revolution voiced their opinion as clearly as those supporting the process from an intrinsically Catholic perspective. Interpretations of the course of the revolution also revealed discrepancies in the episcopate: while some bishops were more invested in promoting social

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89 La Iglesia Católica y La Nueva Cuba 31.5.1959; La Reforma Agraria Cubana y La Iglesia Católica 5.7.1959 (Publicado en la Revista Bohemia).

90 La Reforma Agraria Cubana y La Iglesia Católica 5.7.1959 (Publicado en la Revista Bohemia).

91 La Reforma Agraria Cubana y La Iglesia Católica 5.7.1959 (Publicado en la Revista Bohemia); La reforma agraria y el arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba 21.7.1959.

92 Brenner et al. 2008, 9; Guerra 2012, 8–9.

93 Al Pueblo de Cuba 18.2.1959.

94 La reforma agraria y el arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba 21.7.1959.

95 La Reforma Agraria Cubana y La Iglesia Católica 5.7.1959 (Publicado en la Revista Bohemia); Casavantes Bradford 2014, 73–74.

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doctrine in the revolution, others focused on more dogmatic interpretations of the situation.<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, despite the contesting voices of the episcopate, the Church's efforts at achieving unity and maintaining a sense of uniformity in public perception still shone through.

In the daily life of the Church, most priests and lay Catholics assured the leaders of the revolution of their support; simultaneously, other ecclesial groups were becoming aware of the changing atmosphere in Cuban social spheres, though. For instance, a speech delivered by a lay leader in a local Catholic Action meeting in Havana in March 1959 echoed the sense of urgency arising in the committed laity for defending Catholicism in the revolution<sup>97</sup>—including their own version of Catholicism against more revolutionary interpretations of it. According to the speech, “now, more than ever, a vital and complete action of dynamic, not lukewarm, Catholicism is needed to suffocate the minority of communist laity.”<sup>98</sup>

Similar ideas were mirrored in other associations of Catholic laity. A circular published by another prominent group of Catholic men, *Caballeros Católicos de Cuba*,<sup>99</sup> called for lay Catholics to “show full support to the hierarchy and to alertly and constantly keep watch for the enemies of the church.”<sup>100</sup> Likewise, the Knights of Columbus<sup>101</sup> joined the front by voicing their rejection of communism and atheism. Swearing to militantly defend the Church, the association declared itself ready to stand against the intrusion of atheist doctrines that would destroy both religion and the ideals of democracy. The association also called for a recognition of Christian values and the Church's presence in civic, religious, patriotic, and cultural arenas.<sup>102</sup> In April 1959, they met with Havana's newly appointed auxiliary bishop, Díaz Cía, to discuss matters of urgency.<sup>103</sup> As their most visible gesture, the Knights of Columbus donated to Fidel Castro a collection of papal encyclicals expressing the Church's social doctrine.<sup>104</sup> The aim of the gesture was to demonstrate how Catholic social teaching resonated with the Cuban situation and to offer a framework for further promoting Christian perspectives on social justice in the revolution.

The diocesan committee of Havana for Catholic Action published a statement emphasizing the unity of Catholics in the changes taking place in Cuba:

Again, we insist on the close union of all members of Catholic Action and other associations and Catholics in general. In the whole world, we are living in a time of extreme uncertainty and one full of dangers, in which the enemies of Our Mother the Church unite in order to fight with us. Unity in Christ -- and love --

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96 Interview 4. The ambiguity in the episcopate is also suggested by Kirk 1989 and Holbrook 2009.

97 AHAH ACC JD LH Conferencia pronunciada por la Dra. Esther García Robes, en la Segunda Asamblea de Juntas Parroquiales de la Zona Este, celebrada el 8 de Marzo de 1959. Parroquia de San Judas y San Nicolás.

98 Ahora más que nunca es que es preciso una acción vital y conjunta de un catolicismo dinámico no tibio, que ahogue una minoría laica y comunista. AHAH ACC JD LH Conferencia pronunciada por la Dra. Esther García Robes, en la Segunda Asamblea de Juntas Parroquiales de la Zona Este, celebrada el 8 de Marzo de 1959, Parroquia de San Judas y San Nicolás.

99 *Caballeros Católicos de Cuba* is a Catholic lay organization for men of Cuban origin, founded in 1926 in the province of Las Villas. In 1959, the organization consisted of 176 groups on the island. Aleteia 16.8.2017 Los Caballeros Católicos: Nacen en Cuba y renacen en Miami.

100 Solidarizarse plenamente con la Jerarquía, así como a vigilar atenta y constantemente los ataques de los enemigos de la Iglesia. DM 11.3.1959 Exhortación a la unidad de los Caballeros Católicos de Cuba.

101 *Caballeros de Colón*, Knights of Columbus is a Catholic beneficiary society for men, founded in the United States in 1882. The society arrived in Cuba in 1909. DM 1.4.1959 Caballeros de Colón continúan frente al comunismo y ateísmo.

102 DM 1.4.1959 Caballeros de Colón continúan frente al comunismo y ateísmo.

103 AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 17 4/1959; DM 14.4.1959 Recibirá al Obispo Auxiliar de La Habana.

104 DM 12.4.1959 Momento justo para la doctrina social cristiana.

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are the most effective methods to fight against those powers that oppose the rule of Christ.<sup>105</sup>

In their plea to the people, the militant members of Catholic Action also asked them to pray to *La Virgen de La Caridad* for the future of the nation, “this year more than ever before, to continue to bless us and to preserve peace and concord among all Cubans.”<sup>106</sup> As the Holy Mother, the Church, was globally under attack by her enemies, namely communism, they emphasized that the unity of all Catholics was the most effective defense. A key aspect of such unity was obedience to the authority of the Church and episcopal hierarchy.<sup>107</sup> The discourse on intra-ecclesial dynamics shows that priests possessed considerable autonomy in their communities; the laity expressed their obedience to and respect for the clergy in each community. Further reinforcing their authority was the strong emphasis on sacramentality in the ministry: the role of the clergy was to minister the sacraments and prepare people for the presence of God in local communities.<sup>108</sup> This also influenced the public atmosphere in the Church, as the clergy employed their authority to shape discourses on the revolution.

As was noted by the Cuban Catholics beginning to align themselves in opposition to the revolution, Pope John XXIII signed a decree in April urging Catholics to not vote for communists in elections in Italy. The decree was considered the most severe act of the Holy See against communism to date in the course of the revolution, and in Cuba it was given front-page publicity.<sup>109</sup> Although the decree addressed Italian political circumstances, it was interpreted as a universal statement in Cuba. It received much attention that excommunication as the ultimate ecclesial penalty would not only be reserved for militant communists, but also for those who in any manner favored or supported communism, even as Christians. In Cuba, the decree was seen as a call for all Catholics to recognize the “old and heavy fight between Christian spirituality and the crude, cruel communist materialism.”<sup>110</sup> The decree, and its Cuban interpretation, contributed significantly to the separation of communism and Christianity, placing them as intrinsically incompatible ideas in the Cuban revolutionary process from the perspective of the Catholic Church.

The defense of Catholic faith and thought became the driving force to combat the influence of communism on the revolution.<sup>111</sup> In no other topic of revolutionary restructuring was the debate more heated than educational reform and religious formation in Cuba’s

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105 Estamos viviendo en todo el mundo, una época sumamente azarosa y llena peligros, en la cual los enemigos de nuestra Santa Madre Iglesia se unen para combatirnos. Unión en Cristo - - y amor - - son los medios más seguros de luchar contra estas fuerzas que se oponen al reinado de Cristo. DM 9.4.1959 Exhorta a la unión la Junta Diocesana de Acción Católica.

106 Este año más que nunca, para que continúe bendiciéndonos y conservando la paz y concordia entre todos los cubanos. DM 9.4.1959 Exhorta a la unión la Junta Diocesana de Acción Católica.

107 AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 16 3/1959; AHAH AC CD Masculino Consejo Diocesano de la Habana 3/1959; AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 17 4/1959; AHAH AC JD C Mujeres de Acción Católica Cubana, Junta Diocesana, Cienfuegos: Circular Abril 1959; AHAH AC JD LH Circular No.18 5/1959; AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 19 6/1959.

108 AHAH AC JD LH Parroquia, comunidad viviente y misionera 1/1959.

109 DM 14.4.1959 Pide el Papa a los católicos no voten por los comunistas.

110 La vieja y enconada lucha entre el espiritualismo cristiano y el crudo y cruel materialismo comunista. DM 15.5.1959 Nueva advertencia de la Iglesia sobre el comunismo.

111 AHAH AC CD Masculino Consejo Diocesano de la Habana 3/1959; AHAH AC JN M Mujeres de Acción Católica Cubana: Consejo Diocesano, Cienfuegos. Circular; AHAH AC JD M América Penichet and Esther García Robés to José M. Rodríguez Haddad 4.7.1959; AHAH AC JN Julio 1959; DM 15.3.1959 Una orientación cristiana para los problemas actuales y futuros de Cuba; DM 8.4.1959 ¿Cristianismo o comunismo?



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schools.<sup>112</sup> In several pastoral letters, the episcopate expressed concern over the rumors of anticipated changes in the educational system, which, according to the bishops, were causing confusion among Catholics. Given the speculations about creating a system of national, public education, it was in the interest of the Church to defend private education and religious education in both private and public schools. The bishops remarked that the prohibiting of religious education in public schools was “a tendency of Communist governments.”<sup>113</sup>

Intersecting with the defense of the liberty of education was an interest in sustaining the system of private schools and parents’ right to choose education for their children. For the Church, in the light of Catholic teaching, parental rights were founded upon natural law and superseded the authority of the State.<sup>114</sup> On numerous occasions, laypeople also stepped forth in the national media and public gatherings to affirm the Church’s readiness to defend the right for private education and, first and foremost, religious education.<sup>115</sup> Nonetheless, they were aware of the risk that they might be portrayed as opponents of the revolution for their defense of religious freedom and religious practices in the public sphere.<sup>116</sup>

Apart from discussing ideas of communism, debates in the public sphere touched on the profound issue beginning to divide the Church and the revolution: authority of the State over citizens and Catholics’ obedience to secular authorities. Questions were asked on the streets and in churches:<sup>117</sup> Should Catholics consider themselves under the authority of the ecclesial hierarchy in the first place, or of the revolutionary regime? How could Catholics sympathetic to the revolution navigate between the two? Should they consider themselves as first Catholics and secondly as revolutionaries? What would be revolution’s take on such a stance? How long and how far would the regime allow Catholics to move away from the revolutionary masses in their loyalty to the pope and local episcopate?

Ultimately, the matter of loyalty became connected with questions of both personal identity and citizenry. What did it mean to be Cuban in this time of revolutionary process? What did it mean to be a patriotic citizen of Cuba, professing both a public and private life in the overlapping spheres of the revolution and Catholicism? To whose call would a Catholic, pro-revolutionary Cuban respond in the first place, that of the Church or the revolutionary regime? Within the Church in Cuba, this paradox of dual loyalties was explained as a natural consequence of faith and recognition of Catholic dogma. A Catholic person was simultaneously a citizen of the State, but in that order. The transcendent, eternal authority of the Church—and of Christ as the founder of the Church—surpassed all temporal and secular authorities. Yet Catholics were also obliged to exist in the immediate temporal context and abide by the rules of secular authorities.

According to *Diario de la Marina*, communists in Cuba failed to recognize the nature of

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112 AHAH AC JN COF Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana: La Familia Cristiana; La enseñanza privada 13.2.1959; Al Pueblo de Cuba 18.2.1959; Después del Congreso Católico Nacional 24.12.1959. The heated discourse regarding education between the Catholic Church and the revolutionary government has been discussed by, among others, Chase 2015.

113 La enseñanza privada 13.2.1959; Al Pueblo de Cuba 18.2.1959; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 73–74.

114 Al Pueblo de Cuba 18.2.1959.

115 DM 8.3.1959 Gran concentración católica celebraron jóvenes estudiantes.

116 AHAH AC JD C Mujeres de Acción Católica Cubana, Consejo Diocesano Cienfuegos: Circular Abril 1959; DM 8.3.1959 Gran concentración católica celebraron jóvenes estudiantes.

117 Interview 4; Interview 9; Interview 10.

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Catholic citizenry as a vital force in society. In order to interlace the revolution and religion, “the - - anti-Catholics must acknowledge that in many nations, and in ours particularly, exists a great number of Catholics who are obliged by their conscience to recognize simultaneously the sovereignty of the temporal State and the spiritual sovereignty of the Church.”<sup>118</sup> Also reminding the Cuban revolutionary regime of the authoritative nature of faith, *Diario* appealed to each individual’s moral loyalty as a Catholic to serve, first, God and only secondly secular authorities such as the State. That did not mean, however, that the two sovereignties could not cooperate; on the contrary, *Diario* affirmed that the historically apt nexus of the Church and the revolutionary State would be a mutual recognition of the sovereignty of each and a “moral unity” leading to bilateral cooperation.<sup>119</sup>

For the revolutionary regime, the matter was more complicated and complex. As the Catholic Church was universal both by its very nature and in its physical domain, the Cuban Church recognized and responded to ecclesial supreme authority located outside the national borders. This was problematic from the perspective of the leaders of the revolution, particularly with the nationalist nature of their ideas. For a revolution stemming from national identity and making use of rhetorical attributes of patriotism, fatherland, and nation, the presence of a global, universal actor was a dilemma of high priority. For the Catholic Church in Cuba, paradoxically, its very nature as simultaneously a global and local agent became both an asset and a risk for its survival in the revolutionary reality. From the standpoint of national coherence and unity, the simultaneously transcendent and universal spiritual authority of the Church posed a threat of external agency within the nation.

In the project of building the *patria*, the increasing moral imperative for Cubans to engage in the revolutionary process and express public support for the course of the project entailed the recognition of the regime as the authority of the revolution. Offering a contesting vision to unconditional obedience to the revolutionary leadership, Catholic laypeople insisted on radical obedience to ecclesial authorities as a duty of the militant laity and as a position of autonomy.<sup>120</sup> This was particularly dominant in the Catholic Action groups, whose tradition was built on hierarchical organization and adherence to the ecclesial structure of authority.<sup>121</sup> Catholic Action’s legacy was also based on its history as a European movement intended to educate the laity and offer a counterforce to modern ideologies, such as socialism.<sup>122</sup> In Cuba, Catholic Action constituted the predominant form of lay participation and Catholic social discourse. Moreover, Cuba was among the strongest sites of Catholic Action in Latin America.<sup>123</sup>

Commitment to the Church was instrumental to the Catholic faith and inscribed in the vision of militant laity, a point that the laywomen of Catholic Action were reminded of in Cienfuegos:

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118 Los - - anticatólicos tienen que reconocer que en muchas naciones, y particularmente en la nuestra existe un grandísimo número de católicos que están obligados en conciencia a reconocer simultáneamente la soberanía temporal del Estado y la soberanía espiritual de la Iglesia. DM 19.4.1959 La cooperación entre la Iglesia y el Estado.

119 DM 19.4.1959 La cooperación entre la Iglesia y el Estado.

120 AHAH AC JN M Mujeres de Acción Católica Cubana: Consejo Diocesano, Cienfuegos. Circular Julio 1959.

121 Bidegain 1985; Holbrook 2009.

122 O’Malley 2008, 229–230; Faggioli 2012, 5.

123 Alejos-Grau & Saranyana 2002, 206.

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If you have the spirit of A.C. [Catholic Action], you are obedient. If you are not obedient, do not live in an illusion, you are not Catholic action. Even though you have your name in the brochures of the organization. Even though you donate money punctually. - - And criticize the wrongdoings of others. - - Without obedience you are not Catholic Action. You are diabolic action. You are not with Christ, because He “was obedient unto death,” meaning he died in obedience.<sup>124</sup>

The women issued a call for all to pray for the Church under attack, to “rejoice with the mother’s joy and to bear the sorrows of her pain,” and to commit themselves to the Church by “crying for the sufferings of our Mother the Church when we see her being attacked.”<sup>125</sup> Their petition joined the rhetoric of calling for constant vigilance in the face of the enemies of Catholicism, attacking not only the Cuban Church but also God.

### 3. Politicized Religion, Religious Politics

The greatest demonstration of Catholic activity in the revolutionary process culminated in the organization of the National Catholic Congress in November 1959. Reacting to the threat of communism that the ecclesial hierarchy perceived as an approaching reality, the Church organized the First National Catholic Congress (*El Primer Congreso Nacional Católico de Cuba*) in Havana. The organize proclaimed that the three-day event represented the voice of the Church in Cuban society and aimed at mobilizing lay Catholics to actively participate in the life of the Church in its mission to stand in opposition to communism.<sup>126</sup> The congress was also linked with the national assemblies of all four sub-organizations of Catholic Action, becoming a mobilizing meeting for the laity. All Cuban Catholics, and more broadly all Cubans, were invited to participate.<sup>127</sup>

The National Catholic Congress took place in a period of heightened tension and suspicion about increasing communist influences on the revolution. Initiated by Cuban bishops, but executed by lay members of, most importantly, Catholic Action, the congress responded to the perceived threats by voicing the Church’s disposition and presence in the declining civil society. Although the congress was organized by the clergy and committed lay members in Catholic associations,<sup>128</sup> it was clearly aimed at the laity as a whole, with an aspiration of activating and mobilizing the larger public to critical awareness of the course of the revolution. In a time when political and social life in Cuba was filled with political rallies of gigantic proportions, Fidel Castro appeared in public as the phenomenal leader giving speeches that could last for hours and the masses were both expected and eager to demonstrate their commitment to the revolution.<sup>129</sup> Within the emerging parameters for public performance of the

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124 Si tú tienes espíritu de A.C. tienes obediencia. Y si no tienes obediencia, no te hagas ilusiones, no eres acción católica. Aunque esté tu nombre en los ficheros de la Federación. Aunque cotices puntualmente. -- Y critiques las cosas mal hechos por los otros. - - Sin obediencia no eres A.C. Eres acción diabólica. No estás con Cristo. Porque El ‘fue obediente hasta la muerte’, es decir hasta morir por obediencia. AHAH AC JN M Mujeres de Acción Católica Cubana: Consejo Diocesano, Cienfuegos. Circular Julio 1959.

125 - - Goza con las alegrías de su madre y se entristece con sus penas; - - Y lloremos las penas de nuestra Madre la Iglesia, cuando se vea atacada. AHAH AC JN M Mujeres de Acción Católica Cubana: Consejo Diocesano, Cienfuegos. Circular Julio 1959.

126 BNJM CONGRESO CATÓLICO; Congreso en defensa de la Caridad 11/1959; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 74.

127 AHAH AC CD Circular Nro. 20 por Julio Casteñados Villiers 1.9.1959; DM 28.8.1959 Informan al Jefe del Estado sobre los preparativos del Congreso Católico Nacional.

128 AHAH AC CCLH Circular Septiembre de 1959; AHAH AC CCLH Circular No. 32 Octubre de 1959.

129 Guerra 2012, 37–38.

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revolution, a Catholic event of similar character responded to the production of cohesion in the revolution via a call for the unity of Catholics.

It was in the plan of the Church to include and inform the government on the preparation of the congress—and to engage the regime in the demonstration of Catholic power and influence on the course of the revolution. Already in August, Archbishop Díaz and the organizing committee had visited Fidel Castro, discussing the plan.<sup>130</sup> In a similar manner, a group of delegates from Catholic Action's national committee had visited Cuba's President Osvaldo Dorticós Torrada, informing him of the Congress's proceedings and inviting him to join.<sup>131</sup> In the midst of increased lay activity and the evolving revolutionary process, the hierarchy of the Church considered it essential to keep the State authorities informed and engaged. This suggests that while the Church had already begun to develop its autonomous stance towards the revolution, it still wished to both include the State in its own processes and be included in the future of the State. Alternatively, or correspondingly, it was also in the interests of the Church to maintain a communicative relationship with State authorities during a period when the future course of the revolution was as yet undefined. This is also speaks to the ongoing vision of the Church being able to influence the revolutionary process.

Despite the ongoing political discourse, the episcopate highlighted the nature of the congress as “exclusively Catholic”; the focus of the event was on the teaching and spirituality of the Church, and those were the factors giving birth to the congress.<sup>132</sup> By a public demonstration, Catholics were demanding space for spirituality in the revolution and its political discourse, for the recognition of religiosity as an inscribed dimension of *la cubanidad*.<sup>133</sup> In no other symbol was Cuban spirituality more present than that of *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*. When opening the congress, the image of was taken out of her shrine in the village of El Cobre, near the city of Santiago de Cuba at Cuba's southernmost point, and paraded down the streets of the island in a national procession reaching from south to north. As tens of thousands greeted the Virgin, the image made her way to Havana as the most visible symbol of Catholic national history and Cuban Catholic identity.<sup>134</sup> Concluding her visit, the Virgin was escorted by a large crowd from downtown Havana to the airport by foot, with the journey taking four hours.<sup>135</sup> As the epitome of the island's devotional spirituality, the Virgin's appearance in Havana highlighted the authority of the congress for all Cubans by bringing forth the nationalistic dimension of Marian devotion as an expression of patriotism.

In the congress, the Virgin took on the role of a mother transcending the boundaries of identity, race, and religious belonging, with her presence connecting Cubans through a sense of nationalism. Scholarly work has established her pertinent role in Cuban culture and identity.<sup>136</sup> Michelle Gonzalez calls the Virgin “a vital symbol of Cuban religious and national identity.” According to Gonzalez, she was a shared figure for all Cubans regardless of their affiliation to

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130 DM 28.8.1959 Informan al Jefe del Estado sobre los preparativos del Congreso Católico Nacional.

131 DM 28.8.1959 Urbi et Orbi.

132 AHAH AC CCLH Circular No. 32 Octubre de 1959; El Congreso Nacional Católico 24.11.1959.

133 AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 22 Septiembre de 1959; AHAH AC CCLH Circular No. 32 Octubre de 1959; AHAH CC La Caridad y La Justicia Social por José I. Lasaga.

134 BNJM CONGRESO CATOLICO; Díaz Cía 28.11.1959 La Virgen de la Caridad Nos Espera; Guerra 2012, 94.

135 BNJM CONGRESO CATOLICO.

136 For the legacy of the Virgin in Cuban historiography, see, for example, Pedraza 2007, 249–250.

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the Catholic Church, “a symbol of what it means to be Cuban.”<sup>137</sup> Tweed further argues that through the contrasting narratives on the Virgin that have surfaced in Cuba in different times and social settings, Cubans have in fact negotiated their own identities.<sup>138</sup> Historically, the Virgin played an instrumental role in the nation’s process of self-identification and identity-making at the time when Cuba was constructing its independent identity from Spain.<sup>139</sup> At the early stage of the revolution, as Schmidt proposes, the Virgin became a shared symbol of *la cubanidad*, one to which both Catholic and revolutionary Cubans, Cubans of African origin, and Cubans from all social classes were eager to associate.<sup>140</sup>

In the process of building the revolutionary *patria*, the episcopate emphasized the Virgin’s sacred participation as the beloved Mother of all Cubans: her intercession in the newly established peace and order and her maternal presence on the island.<sup>141</sup> The congress itself was also seen by some as an act of defense for *La Virgen de la Caridad*: the masses receiving the Virgin pledged loyalty to her in the changing landscapes of patriotism, and they claimed recognition of her role in the nationalist discourse.<sup>142</sup> According to Casavantes Bradford, the congress “invoked Cuba’s patron saint as an equally powerful national symbol” as Fidel Castro, by which “Catholic youth thus rejected the idea that Fidel Castro was the sole embodiment of the revolutionary nation.”<sup>143</sup> As the mother of the nation and each individual Cuban, the Virgin belonged to the national imaginary of Cuban culture even in the revolution. In this way, the presence of the Virgin’s effigy in the congress portrayed a sense of nationalism and the Church’s participation in the nation-building project, since the revolution claimed as its historical predecessor the history in which the Virgin was inarguably present. Thus, she was a gateway for the Church to the revolution: a living symbol of Cubanness over whom the Church claimed ownership in the revolutionary process.

In rainy conditions, a march of torches,<sup>144</sup> led by the flags of Cuba and national Catholic associations and followed by “30 000 torchlights and hundreds of thousands of people,”<sup>145</sup> proceeded along the streets of Havana. The marchers were joined by groups representing local ecclesial communities from all over the island, as instructed by the ecclesial dignitaries. At *Plaza Cívica*, the procession joined the crowd gathered under pouring rain and pledged faithfulness to the Mother of the Nation. The event emphasized the nature of the congress as a proclamation, as a collective expression of Catholic faith. The Eucharist celebration was

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137 Gonzalez 2006, 78–79.

138 Tweed 1997, 49.

139 Congreso en defensa de la Caridad 11/1959; Gonzalez 2006, 78–79.

140 Schmidt 2015, 210.

141 AHAH AC CCLH Circular No. 32 Octubre de 1959; La Iglesia Católica Católica y La Nueva Cuba 31.5.1959; El Congreso Católico Nacional 11/1959; Congreso en defensa de la Caridad 11/1959.

142 AHAH AC JD M América Penichet to Antonio Bechile 31.7.1959; Gómez Tréto 1988, 27; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 74.

143 Casavantes Bradford 2014, 74.

144 *Marcha de Antorchas*, March of Torches, is a well-known Cuban tradition initiated in 1953: organized annually on January 27, most famously in Havana by the Students’ Union of the University of Havana, the march commemorates José Martí as a national hero on his birthday. The march is a symbolic institution, led by the leaders of the country, in which hundreds of thousands of children, youngsters, and adults participate. It is also an act reinforcing the connection between Martí’s ideas and the revolution and renewing the participants’ attachment to the revolutionary process by a publicly expressed manifestation of support. For a discussion on Martí’s role in both Cuban national and Catholic discourse, see De La Torre, 2002, 26–44.

145 BNJM CONGRESO CATOLICO.

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referred to as a symbol of Cuba's conceding to the guidance of a higher power; affirming the central role of the Eucharist, the congress argued that "Christ is our hope and our strength,"<sup>146</sup> implicitly proposing that the revolution, State, and government could not surpass the trust that people placed in divine providence.

By emphasizing its spiritual nature, the congress became inevitably political. The congress was an attempt to demonstrate that the Church belonged to the Cuban social sphere as a relevant actor and that the domain of the Church in the revolutionary reality reached beyond spiritual and religious practices: inscribed in the mission of the Church was also participation in social activism, as religion could not be separated from contemporary social and political contexts.<sup>147</sup> According to Lillian Guerra, ecclesial mass mobilization was motivated by political ambitions. As such, the ongoing discourse "revitalized formal participation in religious life as churches became highly politicized sites of autonomous national consciousness."<sup>148</sup> De La Torre concurs with the argument, proposing that Christianity ultimately posed a legitimate, powerful challenge to Castro's power in the first years of the revolution.<sup>149</sup>

Mobilization of lay Catholics was crucial for demonstrating the strength of Catholic masses, "for the boom of Catholicism in our fatherland."<sup>150</sup> As was underscored by Havana's lay leaders, "from the success of this Congress emerges the prestige of Catholicism" in the revolution.<sup>151</sup> In most positive estimations, the congress served to mobilize "all forces and sectors of Cuba with a religious fervor," awakening a sense of shared Cuban nationality through faith.<sup>152</sup> This reflected a deeper vision of portraying the unity of Cubans, which the government sought to construct within the narrative framework of the revolution, through the visible unity of Cuban Catholics.<sup>153</sup> With its strong focus on nationalistic sentiments, and by also linking itself with the predominant political rites continuously occurring on the island, the National Catholic Congress marked a public, collective expression of moral support for the Church.<sup>154</sup> With an estimated one million participants gathering at *Plaza Cívica*, the Mass celebrated at the site of Castro's Messianic appearances at public rallies in support of the revolution challenged the revolution's ability to serve as the sole engine for mobilizing Cubans.<sup>155</sup> According to John C. Super, the congress "was a show of strength that made Castro realize that the Church did have the power to stand up against the revolution."<sup>156</sup> At the same time, the congress served to both underscore the unity of Catholics and called them to further testify to such unity through a public performance of faith.<sup>157</sup>

Further emphasizing the politicized nature of the congress was Fidel Castro himself, who

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146 AHAH AC JD M América Penichet to Antonio Bechile 31.7.1959; AHAH AC JD M Visita a la Junta Diocesana de Matanzas 13.9.1959; El Congreso Católico Nacional 11/1959; Circular del Venerable Episcopado 18.11.1959.

147 AHAH CC La Caridad y La Justicia Social por José I. Lasaga.

148 Guerra 2012, 94.

149 De La Torre 2002, 99.

150 AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 23 Octubre de 1959; AHAH AC CCLH Importante 20.10.1959; AHAH AC CCLH Circular No. 32 Octubre de 1959; AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 24 Noviembre de 1959.

151 AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 24 Noviembre de 1959.

152 AHAH AC CCLH Circular Septiembre de 1959; AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 25 Diciembre de 1959.

153 El Congreso Católico Nacional 11/1959.

154 Schmidt 2015, 204–206.

155 AHAH AC CCLH Circular Septiembre de 1959; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 74.

156 Super 2003.

157 AHAH AC JD PDR Circular No. de 1959; AHAH AC JD M América Penichet to Antonio Bechile 31.7.1959.

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was present at the gathering at Plaza Cívica but left midway through it after criticism of the revolution surfaced. Concurring with the Catholic Congress, Castro urged Cubans to prioritize the defense of the revolution over everything else. In legislation, this also meant the ending of judicial independence and new structures of punishment for traitors. Most dramatic for Cuban Catholics was the new definition of counterrevolutionary guilt based on sympathy, association, and class affiliation. In distinguishing good Cubans from bad Cubans, Castro also appropriated allegories of Jesus Christ by referring to himself as a Messiah for good revolutionaries and a martyr crucified by the traitors of the revolution. This treatment of Christian language spread to other areas of revolutionary rhetoric, and the use of faith-originated metaphors, such as sacrifice, martyrdom, resurrection, and liberation, become a part of the revolution's rhetorical repertoire.<sup>158</sup>

The sessions of the congress were strongly marked by the agency of Catholic Action, the most influential lay Catholic organization on the island, with *Juventud Católica* (Catholic Youth) as the dynamic motor of the event.<sup>159</sup> Concurring with the congress, Catholic Action organized national assemblies for all of its groups; through public participation in the meetings, lay Catholics were strongly encouraged to participate in and demonstrate their commitment to the Church.<sup>160</sup> This reflected quite well the comprehensive mobilization catalyzed by the polarization of Cuban society. A specific case reinforced by the congress was the social participation of Catholic laywomen: at the end of 1959, the women involved with Catholic Action had begun to study with a new vigor the rights and responsibilities of women engaged in civic participation and the means of achieving more knowledge and education for women through social discourse.<sup>161</sup>

As a collective act of public demonstration, the congress drew attention and garnered responses from the government as well as revolutionary masses. The congress served as a demonstration of the capability of the Church to mobilize its followers similarly to the manner in which the revolution was mobilizing citizens on a mass scale. Crahan calls this “the emergence of the Catholic Church as the institutional base for the opposition” to the revolution.<sup>162</sup> As such, the congress was inevitably interpreted as a demonstration of counterrevolutionary attitudes and opposition to the government. It was the first public act of resistance by the Church; it also led to the first division to take place within the Church. In the eyes of the regime, those who participated in the congress were marked as potential opponents of the revolution; correspondingly, the Church interpreted the absence of Catholics from the watershed event as open support for the revolution.

Particularly political in tone were the speeches delivered at meetings of Catholic Action's

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158 Guerra 2009; Guerra 2012, 72–73, 91, 99–100; Schmidt 2015, 226–228; Benson 2016, 207.

159 AHAH AC CCLH Circular No. 32 Octubre de 1959; Congreso en defensa de la Caridad 11/1959; Después del Congreso Católico Nacional 24.12.1959; Guerra 2012, 94.

160 AHAH AC CCLH Convocatoria 17.8.1959; AHAH AC JN M Consejo Nacional Octubre de 1959; AHAH AC CCLH Importante 20.10.1959; AHAH AC JN M Consejo Nacional Octubre de 1959; AHAH AC JN JF Hilda López and Esther G. Robés to América Penichet 15.11.1959; AHAH AC JN JF Asamblea especializada 27.11.1959; AHAH AC JN M Mujeres de Acción Católica Cubana VII Asamblea Nacional y VI Jornada Nacional de Estudio 27.11.1959; AHAH AC JN JF Asamblea nacional, grupos parroquiales y locales Noviembre 27–28, 1959.

161 AHAH AC JN M Mujeres de Acción Católica Cubana VII Asamblea Nacional y VI Jornada Nacional de Estudio 27.11.1959; BNJM CONGRESO CATOLICO.

162 Crahan 1985.

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sub-organizations and the closing event of the congress. Voices of the clergy and laity alike rose to criticize the revolution before an audience of 10,000 Cubans at Havana's baseball stadium, *de la Tropical*, as the closing ceremony was defined as "an act setting principles, clearing doubts, ratifying postures,"<sup>163</sup> to which the audience responded with a standing ovation. As the event was also broadcasted nationwide on television and radio, it became a nationally acknowledged declaration of criticism on the state of the revolution.

Among the more audacious speeches were those delivered by politically conscious lay Catholics in sessions addressing the revolution and its future. Drawing from traditional Catholic social doctrine, the speakers emphasized a just distribution of wealth and the right to work and just wages, while fiercely defending individual rights to private property. Merging together Pope Pius XII's socio-political thought from the 1940s and references to Pope John XXIII's acknowledgment of the humanity and dignity of workers, in contrast to merely emphasizing the value of work, Catholic voices in Cuba rejected both liberal capitalism and communism as extreme forms of production and polar opposites to human dignity. This discourse placed liberty at the center of Catholic social emphasis: liberty as a God-created state of existence, signifying liberty from slavery by "any other person, any company, any organization, any party, any State."<sup>164</sup> Further reinforcement of papal teachings was signaled through a broadcast of Pope John XXIII's message to Cuba over Vatican radio: as the Cuban Church joined the discourse on the nation's future, it did so with the support and tradition of the global Catholic Church.<sup>165</sup>

Instrumental in the criticism on the course of the revolution was a rejection of totalitarianism. According to José I. Lasaga, one the lay speakers at the congress, the criticism offered by the Church was employed primarily in the defense human dignity and liberty:

So it is that we want all of Cuba to hear clearly on this day, and to always know, that if the Church anywhere opposes communist ideologies, it is not for defending unfair privileges - - but for maintaining the dignity of men - - before the inhuman exploitation that occurs in totalitarian States.<sup>166</sup>

Alberto Martín Villaverde, the bishop of Matanzas, defined most clearly the normative claim of the congress, and of the Church, before the revolution: the Church wanted social justice, but only *Christian* social justice, as defined by the Church itself.<sup>167</sup> In contrast to Lasaga's vision, the tradition of Catholic social doctrine was employed in defense of settled paradigms of class, race, and sociopolitical status; in a similar vein, argumentation for more inclusive rights for all Cubans drew from Catholic tradition, but with considerably less concrete legitimacy.

The Church was defending the privileged individuals and their already established rights as much as the rights of those Cubans who were discovering and establishing their voice

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163 Fue un acto para sentar principios, para aclarar dudas, para ratificar posturas. BNJM CONGRESO CATOLICO.

164 De ningún otro hombre, de ninguna empresa, de ninguna organización, de ningún partido, de ningún Estado. AHAH CCN La Caridad y La Justicia Social por José I. Lasaga.

165 BLPE Radiomensaje del Sumo Pontífice Juan XXIII a los fieles de Cuba con ocasión del Congreso Nacional Católico; Farber 2006, 148.

166 Queremos, pues, que toda Cuba oiga bien claramente en este día, y sepa para siempre, que si la Iglesia en todas partes se opone a las ideologías de tipo comunista, no es por defender privilegios injustos - - sino por mantener la dignidad del hombre - - frente a la explotación inhumana que tiene lugar en los Estados totalitarios. AHAH CCN La Caridad y La Justicia Social por José I. Lasaga.

167 Congreso en defensa de la Caridad 11/1959.



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through the revolution. In this way, the Cuban Church continued to reflect its historical role as the church of white, urban middle-class Cubans. While it promoted the rights of rural peasants and the Afro-Cuban population, even by encouraging privileged Cubans to contribute through a loss of assets and demanding just wages and equal rights to labor for all Cubans, it also defended the rights of Cuba's privileged population, including the right to private property of the middle and upper classes. This also spoke of the close theological proximity of the Cuban Church to European Catholicism—and its profound distance from the revolution at its very socio-political core.

In the closing speech given by Martin Villaverde, the crowd was led to join *El Credo Social Católico*, a revised creed expressing the core of Catholic social doctrine. As the culmination of the congress, the crowd confessed their faith in social justice and the doctrine of the Catholic Church, not communism or Marxism.<sup>168</sup> “Totalitarian State – no! Social justice – yes! Emancipation of workers and farmers – yes! Communism – no!” was the chant echoed by the audience with a sense of pressing urgency.<sup>169</sup> Through these declarations, the congress presented a juxtaposition of Catholic doctrine and revolutionary ideas: it presented a competing vision, an alternative to the revolution, embedded in an intrinsically Catholic understanding of society.

Paradoxically, the vision built on confidence in the profoundly Catholic nature of Cubanness; at the same time, the public unrest and movement within the Church also issued a call to testify to it.<sup>170</sup> By contrasting a Christianity comprised of charity and justice with communist materialism, of which injustice and clashes were to emerge, the congress ultimately signaled a choice for all Cubans. As the Catholic pressure placed upon the course of the revolutionary process met with the heightened revolutionary fervor and mounting support for the Cuban government, Cubans were called to choose and commit totally to one or the other vision, without a middle ground or alternatives. The congress made visible a shift in frameworks of Catholic citizenry as defined by the Church: it was becoming more challenging for Catholics to identify as revolutionaries.

The congress also had curious effects on the revolution's evolving politics: it seems Castro and his regime were not as detached from the Catholic demonstration of authority as both the revolutionary and subsequent scholarly work have assumed. According to Guerra, Castro allowed the Catholic event to influence his foreign policy: in order to avoid confrontation with the congress, Castro postponed Soviet Vice Premier Anastas Mikoyan's visit to Havana in November.<sup>171</sup> Further examining the repercussions of the congress, Samuel Farber estimates that, even more generally, the “massive show of Catholic strength caused Castro to retreat temporarily from anything associated with the Soviet Union or Communism. Mikoyan could not understand Castro's hesitation, probably because he was not familiar with Cuban politics and society”<sup>172</sup>—to which Catholicism seemed also to belong in Castro's imagination as a component of national identity and expression. This suggests that Catholicism had also assumed

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168 AHAH AC JN Congreso Católico; BNJM CONGRESO CATOLICO; Congreso en defensa de la Caridad 11/1959; BLPE El Congreso Católico Nacional; Interview 2; Interview 12.

169 AHAH CC La Caridad y La Justicia Social por José I. Lasaga.

170 Congreso en defensa de la Caridad 11/1959.

171 Guerra 2012, 109.

172 Farber 2006, 148.

a politicized role from the perspective of the revolution.

In scholarship, the most recognized acts of Catholic resistance to communist influence on the revolution culminate with the visit of Mikoyan. Among the much recounted facts of the Catholic reactions to the visit, when it finally took place in February 1960, was *Diario de Marina*'s editor and owner José I. Rivero's decline of an invitation to a cocktail reception to honor the visitor,<sup>173</sup> and the Catholic students' protest of Mikoyan by placing a wreath on the memorial of José Martí in Havana. In scholarly works, an often-used example of the mounting Church–State tension is the violent clash that ensued from the students' manifest of opposition, which resulted in casualties and marked one of the early physical conflicts in the revolution.<sup>174</sup>

What the controversy and contesting interpretations of Catholic discourse regarding the Mikoyan visit suggest is a deepening gap between the institutional church and the revolutionary regime. Although the first year of the revolutionary process had been filled with Catholic lay activism, in 1960 it was the episcopate that took the initiative in navigating the revolution from an oppositional standpoint. In the course of the year, the ideological polarization became visible in the actions of the Church, particularly through the pastoral letters issued by Cuban bishops. In an attempt to protect the identity of the Church from what was considered an alien threat and an ideology completely contradictory to Catholicism, Cuban bishops raised their voices in opposition. By the time the Cuban bishops issued an open letter to Prime Minister Fidel Castro in August 1960,<sup>175</sup> they had already grown vocal in their disapproval of the course of the revolution and wary of its stance against the Church.<sup>176</sup>

The pastoral letters represented the normative voice of the Church. Within the realms of Catholic *magisterium*, the episcopate's voices were instructive and authoritative for the clergy, religious orders, and laity alike. With grave urgency and otherworldly authority, the letters proclaimed truths in black-and-white tones. Bishops began to portray the disagreement as a battlefield with communism as the enemy and the Church as the only credible force in the fight against evil. Painting images of combat and war, and urging Catholics to take a militant stance and demonstrate their faith through visible opposition, the bishops warned followers about the course of the revolution and demanded that Catholics pledge their allegiance to the Church instead of the State.<sup>177</sup> Through the letters, the normative voices created a world of binaries and polarization: a world where God was present in the quotidian choices of Cuban Catholics in their everyday lives to either take a stand or to remain silent, or to even join the revolutionary movement, to oppose evil or to fall before it. Facing a juxtaposition impossible to reconcile, Catholics were asked by their leaders if they were with Christ or against Him in their engagement with both the revolution and the Church.

Archbishops Pérez Serantes of Santiago de Cuba and Evelio Díaz Cía of Havana, together with Alberto Martín Villaverde, bishop of the Diocese of Matanzas, presented themselves as

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173 Guerra 2012, 110.

174 Kirk 1989, 77; Guerra 2012, 115–116.

175 See Appendix 3, picture 2.

176 COCC CP Carta abierta del Episcopado al Sr. Primer Ministro Dr. Fidel Castro 4.12.1960.

177 Por Dios y por Cuba 5/1960; Circular Colectiva 7.8.1960; La Santa Misión 8/1960; Por la unidad de la Iglesia 1.9.1960; Ni traidores ni parias 24.9.1960; Roma o Moscu 10/1960; Vivamos en paz 11/1960; Carta abierta del Episcopado al Sr. Primer Ministro Dr. Fidel Castro 4.12.1960; La Voz de la Iglesia 6.12.1960; Con Cristo o contra Cristo 23.12.1960; LQ 30.10.1960 ¿Es cristiana la revolución social que se está verificando en Cuba?; De La Torre 2002, 96–97; Super 2003.

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the most active and critical commentators on revolutionary politics.<sup>178</sup> With their voices, the character of the Cuban episcopate seemed predominantly European. In 1960, four of the six bishops in Cuba were Spanish by origin, as were the majority of the clergy and religious orders on the island. The close historical connections and shared ecclesial tradition with Spanish Catholicism repeated itself in the episcopate's perspective on the revolution and its ideology. Among the ecclesial hierarchy, renouncing communism did not stem solely from the teachings of the universal Catholic Church, but also from fear based on personal histories in Spain. For those of Spanish origin, the closest point of reference for interpreting and analyzing the Cuban revolution was Franco's Spain.<sup>179</sup> In the magisterium of the Church, the papal encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, originally written in 1937 as a response to the Spanish Civil War and religious persecution in Russia, provided the clergy with a theological framework for mirroring the Cuban situation against similar landscapes in global Catholicism.<sup>180</sup>

Within the Church, the normative voices rose to prominence in the course of the year 1960. In the production of the normativity of ecclesial voices, Pérez Serantes and Villaverde were among the most vocal bishops, sometimes producing several pastoral letters each week in the course of the year 1960. Yet other voices also rose to the occasion: among the more complex, ad hoc voices of normativity has been that of Eduardo Boza Masvidal, a young diocesan priest who became a powerful voice of the streets. As Boza Masvidal was eventually elevated to the position of auxiliary bishop of Havana in the spring of 1960<sup>181</sup>, his voice also became an example of the creation of normativity both within the Cuban Church as he presented extensive, in-depth commentaries on the revolution for the Catholic media before its seizure in the spring of 1960. In scholarship, Boza Masvidal has been treated as a primary example of Catholic leadership and resistance to the course of revolution at its early stages.<sup>182</sup>

The production of normative voices within the Cuban Church is a relevant consideration for contemporary scholarly work. As discussed in the introduction of this study, the availability of Cuban primary sources has significantly directed scholarly attention: amidst the silence of the archives, the official publications of the Catholic Church in Cuba have remained the only sources of information for explaining the Church's experience of and discourse on the revolutionary process.<sup>183</sup> This has severely limited the scope of study, further portraying the

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178 For Pérez Serantes, see *Ni traidores ni parias* 24.9.1960; *Roma o Moscu* 10/1960; *Con Cristo o contra Cristo* 23.12.1960. For Díaz Cía, see *La Iglesia Católica y La Nueva Cuba* 31.5.1959; *La Virgen de la Caridad Nos Espera* 28.11.1959. For Martín Villaverde, see *La Reforma Agraria Cubana y la Iglesia Católica* 5.7.1959; *Congreso en defensa de la Caridad* 11/1959.

179 The interpretative narratives of Franco's politics have dominated scholarly understanding of the Spanish Catholic clergy in Cuba and their stance on the revolution. The perspectives derived from Franco's Spain among the Spanish clergy in Cuba are discussed by, among others, Crahan 1985; Kirk 1989; Alonso Tejada 1999.

180 De La Torre 2002, 98; De La Torre 2003, 27.

181 See Appendix 1.

182 See Tweed 1997, 25–26; De La Torre 2002, 99; Pedraza 2007, 88–89, 107–109; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 89.

183 In 1995, the Catholic Church in Cuba published a selection of episcopal documents and pastoral letters. The collection, *La Voz de La Iglesia en Cuba: 100 documentos episcopales*, has become to form the canon for acknowledged documentation representing the official voice of the Church in the revolution. It should be noted that *La Voz de La Iglesia* is a selection of documents; it does not contain all the documents of the period it covers but instead a collection of preselected documents. In this study, the pastoral letters are referred to in the form they were published in *La Voz de La Iglesia*, in order to allow an examination of the production of history through the selection of documentation. Some of these documents were also recovered in archives as original versions or drafts

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normative voices as the *only* voices of the Church. In scholarly works, substantial attention has thus been paid to the more institutional, authoritative voices of the Church.<sup>184</sup> The focus on pastoral letters and other written, and thus inevitably historicized, statements of the bishops has led to an emphasis on the authoritative voices of the episcopate, even further reinforcing their normative character not only in their own time and context but also in the revolutionary historiography and the study of the revolution's historiography. The focus on the voices of the episcopate also relates to the long-standing trend in both Cuban historiography and the scholarly study of it: the emphasis placed on the leadership of the revolution. As much attention as the grand narrative of the revolution has devoted to Fidel Castro, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and Raúl Castro—the normative leadership of the revolution—over the years, a similar approach of focusing on the leadership of the Church as the normative representation of Catholicism has dominated in the narratives of both the revolution and Cuban Catholicism. Consequently, the dominance of these perspectives has transformed into a scholarly emphasis of more hierarchically established histories of religion and the revolution.

In the first years of the revolution, collective normativity was also a consciously constructed method for the Church to address the revolutionary leadership. Among the clearest voices of collective normativity was the open letter of Cuban bishops sent to Fidel Castro in December 1960.<sup>185</sup> The voices of the episcopate, which collectively called on Castro to reconsider the emerging rejection of Catholicism in the revolutionary process, joined the rapidly mounting polarization of Catholics and revolutionaries in daily life. In public perception, directed by revolutionary fervor, the role of the Church as a collective voice of criticism from within the revolutionary process began to appear as counterrevolutionary.

In the course of the year 1960, the concept "counterrevolutionary" was first attached to the Catholic Church. In the climate of intolerance of any opposition that had already begun with the collapsing civil society, anticommunism began to increasingly mark the counterrevolutionary attitude, even though the regime insisted it was not communist. Correspondingly, good Cubanness and exemplary participation in social life were defined by being a good revolutionary, which also included public demonstrations of support for the revolution. From these perceptions, it was only a short way to interpreting opposition to the revolution as a betrayal of not only the regime, but also of the fatherland as a much graver offense to citizenry.<sup>186</sup>

From building the *patria*, the revolution proceeded to building a revolutionary citizenry. Citizenship became a defining issue for the revolution, and consequently also for the identity of the Church. As the revolutionary regime pointed out, the majority of clergy and members of religious orders present on the island were of Spanish origin.<sup>187</sup> The long colonial shadow of the Church, on the one hand, and the close relations of the Church in Cuba to the Catholic Church in the United States, on the other, became negative attributes for the Church's credibility in the revolution. As national identity and patriotism were repeatedly portrayed as revolutionary

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preceding their publication for the general public; in that case, each document was compared to the one published later and, if necessary, discussed in more detail.

184 See Crahan 1979; Kirk 1989; Super 2003; Pedraza 2007.

185 COCC CP Carta abierta del episcopado al Sr. Primer Ministro Dr. Fidel Castro 4.12.1960.

186 Guerra 2012, 75–77, 92–100; Schmidt 2015, 190.

187 Schmidt 2015, 209; Kirk 1989, 87.

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virtues, the Church and its predominantly Spanish clergy were perceived as intrinsically non-Cuban, and therefore, possibly anti-Cuban, which had already begun to account for anti-revolutionary affiliation as well.

Further marking the citizenry of the Spanish clergy was their legacy from Franco-era Spain.<sup>188</sup> Fidel Castro repeatedly referred to Spanish priests as right-wing nationalists, some of them pro-Franco and reactionary.<sup>189</sup> Concurring with Castro's claim, De La Torre argues that Spanish priests "transplanted the atmosphere of a religious crusade against Communism from Spain to Cuba."<sup>190</sup> Kirk analyzes the expressions of the clergy from the perspective of nationalism, discussing employment of religious expression by Spanish clergy for politicized purposes, such as celebrating Masses for "victims of religious persecution" and Franco's victory in Spain.<sup>191</sup>

The fierce reactions that began with the clergy and were mirrored in the laity joined the emotionally charged and highly political atmosphere of Cuba. The reactions of the episcopate paved the way for an identity of opposition and resistance among Catholics, those responding to the leadership and authority of the episcopate. This group, most of whom were affiliated with Catholic organizations for the laity,<sup>192</sup> began to grow in the direction of offering more criticism and publicly pronounced disapproval of the revolution.<sup>193</sup> In its extreme, this led to some individuals and groups of Catholics to become "engaged in counterrevolutionary activities, openly supporting and praising the United States," as stated by De La Torre.<sup>194</sup>

In the public sphere of the revolution, two Catholic newspapers assumed voices of critique. Among the loudest Catholic voices in the Cuban public sphere in 1960 was that of *Diario de la Marina*, a daily newspaper with both right-wing and Catholic affiliations. The strong voice of criticism assumed by the paper reflected the sociodemographic settings for creating space for discourse on the revolutionary process. As has been established in other scholarly studies, the civic sphere in which the revolutionary discourses were created from 1959 onwards was a largely middle-class space, a site in which privileged urban citizens debated the future of the revolution.<sup>195</sup> In a similar way, opposition and counterrevolutionary critiques of the radicalizing revolution were reserved, although not exclusively, for the privileged.<sup>196</sup> With this pretext, the intrinsically intertwining connection of Catholicism, class, and race also

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188 The revolutionary narrative emphasizing the foreignness of the Cuban Church as a reality and a legacy stemming from the vast amount of Spanish clergy and their influence on Cuban ecclesial life is discussed by, for instance, Crahan 1985 and Alonso Tejada, 1999.

189 Fidel y la religión 1985, 209.

190 De La Torre 2003, 27.

191 Kirk 1989, 83.

192 See Appendix 3, picture 1.

193 For instance, AHAH AC JD PDR Dora Ortiz Cabanzón to Ramón Casas 12.1.1960; AHAH AC JN CES Plan mínimo del trabajo del Centro de Orientación Social, mayo 1960; AHAH AC JN CES Centro de Orientación Social 28 y 29 de Mayo 1960; AHAH AC JD PDR Informe de la visita a la Junta Diocesana de Pinar del Río; AHAH AC CCLH Asociación Caballeros Católicos de Cuba Rama A de la Acción Católica Cubana, Consejo Diocesano de La Habana, Circular No. 36 Febrero de 1960; AHAH AC AN Junta Nacional Asamblea Nacional de Juntas Diocesanas 28 y 29 Mayo de 1960; AHAH AC AN La Junta Parroquial en la Acción Católica 28 y 29 de Mayo; AHAH AC CCLH Informe del presidente diocesano a la VIII asamblea diocesana de La Habana 20.11.1960.

194 De La Torre, 28.

195 Guerra 2012, 41–42; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 13.

196 Casavantes Bradford 2014, 13.

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became visible through the manner in which Cubans approached the Church with apprehension regarding the revolution. According to Schmidt, the Church became “a refuge for those Cubans who objected to the leftward direction of revolutionary policies.”<sup>197</sup>

For the Catholic Church, the privileged space for negotiating and contesting the revolutionary process was a historically innate space, as most of the actively practicing Catholics in Cuba were urban, white middle-class citizens. For them, socially conscious Catholicism was intrinsically linked with the ideal of politically active lay engagement, further underscoring the nexus of Catholic lay movements, race, and social discourse in the revolution. In this way, Catholicism was not only linked with race, social class, and political conviction, but also represented a link between political participation and identification with Cubanness.

These socio-political alignments were reflected on the pages of *Diario de la Marina* and *La Quincena*. In scholarly work, *Diario* is usually treated as one of the most reactionary, anti-communist newspapers and given a pioneering role in the opposition to the revolutionary regime.<sup>198</sup> As the oldest newspaper in Cuba, with a pro-business and anti-Agrarian Reform stance, *Diario* was called counterrevolutionary by the Communist Party already in early 1960.<sup>199</sup> The strong association of *Diario* with the institutional church did not put the Church in a favorable light, as the stances of *Diario*’s lay Catholic writers came to represent a public voice of the Church.

In comparison to *Diario de la Marina*, *La Quincena* was considered a more socially progressive voice. The Dominican Order was in charge of the fortnightly publication, with Father Ignacio Biain serving as its editor-in-chief, but it also featured pieces by diocesan clergy such as Eduardo Boza Masvidal. Compared to *Diario de la Marina*, *La Quincena* appeared more progressive, even optimistic about the revolution, highlighting the revolution’s opportunities in providing the much-needed social reforms on the island. However, the publication steered towards mounting criticism of the revolution in the early 1960s and published pieces containing heavy criticism of both the revolution and communism. The publication also provided public exposure for certain individuals, whether clergy or laity, who wanted to profile themselves as radically outspoken critics of the government. *La Quincena* engaged in retrospectively commenting on incidents and conflicts in Church–State matters and sought written explanations for them,<sup>200</sup> which was deemed too public for the revolution’s image of consensus and consolidated support.

In the period of shifting dynamics and power struggles over ownership of the revolution, the two publications portrayed two competing Catholic visions of the new Cuban society. On the one side was *Diario de la Marina*, with its right-wing traditionalism of Spanish origin. Although portrayed by laypeople, the stance also echoed that of the majority of Cuba’s Catholic hierarchy and their critique of the revolution. On the other end of the spectrum were the most progressive voices on the pages of *La Quincena*: they represented a more socially conscious, reform-positive approach to Catholicism and its place in the revolution, yet still maintained the principles of religious freedom and autonomy of the Church.<sup>201</sup>

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197 Schmidt 2015, 202.

198 See Casavantes Bradford 2014, 69; Guerra 2012, 120.

199 Guerra 2012, 120.

200 For instance, LQ 10–11/1959; Boza Masvidal 30.10.1960.

201 Holbrook 2009.

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Both the publications were dissolved in the seizure of the press and media in the spring of 1960. In the course of the year, all independent press on the island ceased to exist, as the government dissolved newspapers and magazines. As control of the media was crucial for creating an image of a unified, solid revolution and its mass support, the sources of public, written critique were effectively and completely silenced by the government.<sup>202</sup> It must be noted that the Catholic media was not the only media seized by the government, nor was it seized only because it was critical of the revolution. The government seized all media because all media had to be brought under the control of the State: only then could the media serve the purpose of creating the grand narrative and imaginary of the revolution.

As a result, the only channel left available for the ecclesial hierarchy was communication through pastoral letters, sermons, and speeches.<sup>203</sup> Schmidt argues that the Church became one of the few independent spaces of thought and expression on the island after the seizure of the press.<sup>204</sup> This, paradoxically, also underlined the stance of the Church by making use of the most ecclesial tools of critique that the Church still possessed: pulpits and churches, personal contacts, and direct communication within congregations. It also strengthened the authority of episcopal voices: the collapse of the Catholic media contributed dramatically to silencing public lay voices and, consequently, all contesting voices within the Church. The normativity of the episcopate's voice was thus further consolidated by the disappearance of alternate Catholic voices in the public sphere.

The seizure of the Catholic media illustrated the manner through which the revolution took control of all spheres of public and civic life within the first years of the revolutionary process. A crucial course of events in establishing revolutionary rule over the nation was the decline and eventual collapse of civil society under State control. From the summer of 1960 until the fall of 1961, the government nationalized all foreign companies on the island and most local industries, schools, hospitals, stores, and social clubs.<sup>205</sup> According to Pedraza, by the end of 1961, only two years into living with the revolution, Cuban civil society had collapsed, taking all opposition and open criticism with it.<sup>206</sup>

Prior to the disappearance of its civic activities and agency, the Catholic Church was among the most visible and active participants in civil society, with its domain predominantly being in the non-governmental sector. Therefore, it was also one of the social actors whose work suffered the most from the nationalizations and seizures. Before the waves of nationalization, the Church had claimed authority through its role as a provider in Cuban civil society. With its strong presence in schooling and healthcare, the Church had represented the most organized and widespread non-governmental organization on the island.

The seizure of the Catholic media did not equal the seizure of all Catholic distribution of printed information—while it served to silence the Church in public, the archives provide hundreds of examples of continuous publication within the Church. Ranging from singular leaflets to organized collections of local and diocesan publications circulated within dioceses and local communities, these examples show that although access to national media was cut off

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202 Pedraza 2007, 68–69; Guerra 2012, 28.

203 Pedraza 2007, 69.

204 Schmidt 2015, 209.

205 Conde 1999, 34; Guerra 2012, 135.

206 Pedraza 2007, 219.

for the Church, ecclesial offices continued to produce and publish materials with a low profile outside the public sphere.<sup>207</sup> The reason for the lack of scholarly knowledge on these publications as voices of the Cuban Church is their profile as local productions with only a limited circulation, currently stored in the classified archives. Nevertheless, in their time the publications discussed, with varying tones, the socio-political circumstances on the island and depicted quite distinctively Catholic responses to the revolution.

These findings suggest that while the Church ceased to publish in the public sphere, it continued, or even reinforced, its internal publication process using the material resources still at its disposal. Most importantly, when read with an eye towards the internal reality of the Church, these publications offer remarkable insights into the production of knowledge within the Church. As they show, with the fading of the normative voices of the episcopate in the course of 1960 and 1961, new voices emerged and assumed more space in the internal discourse of the Church. Yet they were not, and have not been, acknowledged in scholarship, with the emphasis and definition of ecclesial voices still frozen in 1960 and restricted to those of the episcopal hierarchy. With the year 1960 representing a turning point, or a point of silencing, in acknowledging and analyzing the agency and voices of the Church in preceding scholarship due to the lack of historical evidence, this study now moves into uncharted areas.

#### 4. The Occupation of Christ

Instead of direct military control, the revolution sustained its authority and power by social control. As discussed by Sierra Madero, the consolidation of power by the revolutionary leadership built on the social homogenization of the people and revolutionary culture, generating a shared sense of collectivity and moral communitarianism.<sup>208</sup> In the construction of such uniformity in 1960, the government already embodied a zero-tolerance policy towards any forms of suspicious, possibly oppositional, behavior, leading to an unprecedented radicalization of attitudes and polarization among Cubans.<sup>209</sup> While Castro himself assured people that the revolution allowed for freedom of expression, the parameters of permissible dissidence were never clearly pronounced. This ultimately served to authorize the revolutionary rulers to decide on the frames of acceptable critique and freedom of expression.<sup>210</sup>

In establishing the revolutionary rule, the mobilization of individuals and creation of bottom-up processes of support were key to building a solid foundation of legitimacy. The government created organizations and networks of social control for citizens to both produce and portray loyalty to the revolution. Committees for Defense of the Revolution, CDR (*Comités de Defensa de la Revolución*), were founded in September 1960. As the organization aimed at reinforcing social control of the revolution at a grassroots level, the committees became a form of collective vigilance. Known as the eyes and ears of the revolution, the committees focused

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207 Among the extensive amount of examples are AHAH AC RJ Boletín Nacional, JEC Secundaria; AHAH AC RJ Boletín asesor JOC, La Habana: julio y agosto 1960; AHAH AC JN Órgano Oficial de la Acción Católica Cubana año 1960, número 3; AHAH AC JD LH Iglesia parroquial de Bejucal: Semana Santa, del día 26 de Marzo al 2 de Abril 1961; AHAH AC JD LH Oración al Espíritu Santo por el Concilio Euménico, año 1961, número 4; AHAH AC JN COL Navidad: fiesta religiosa, fiesta del hogar 1961; AHAH AC JN M Orientación a la dirigente; BE 1960; BE Enero-Abril 1961. See also Appendix 2, pictures 1, 2.

208 Sierra Madera 2016.

209 Guerra 2012, 126, 128.

210 Brenner et al. 2008, 11.



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on monitoring daily life in neighborhoods and on blocks.<sup>211</sup> According to de la Fuente, they also served “to channel revolutionary enthusiasm, mobilize and control the population, and give symbolic power to groups whose participation in Cuba’s political life had been minimal before, such as women and Afro-Cuban citizens.”<sup>212</sup>

With CDR, vigilance became a civic duty. In their very nature, the CDR not only represented a top-down method for social control by the government, but also constituted a civic movement organized as a bottom-up process, and as such, they sometimes lacked both organization and order in the early stages. Individuals who became invested in the movement on their block often decided for themselves how to carry out the procedures of vigilance.<sup>213</sup> Adding to the authority of individuals were, as historian Lillian Guerra points out, the loose frameworks for using such terms as “counterrevolutionary”: they granted individuals power and authority to decide what and who was actually seen as counterrevolutionary. The citizens were empowered to act as “self-appointed judges and mediators of other citizen’s attitudes and behavior.”<sup>214</sup> The mobilization of citizens through collective vigilance became a method for maintaining domestic security through peer surveillance and evaluation of other citizens.<sup>215</sup> Guerra also suggests that repression and toleration were decided by local activists in mass organizations and workplaces,<sup>216</sup> in lieu of state-controlled mechanisms of punishment. This, perhaps, provides one explanation for why conflicts seemed to arise more easily between revolutionaries and Catholics in certain neighborhoods, while in other neighborhoods they maintained a non-violent form of coexistence, even if characterized by mounting suspicion and hostility.

The State expected social commitment from its citizens: active participation in revolutionary organizations, visible support for the government, and the renouncing of undesirable affiliations. Public commitment was also required to obtain a job or a position of trust in the administration and governance of the State. Correspondingly, redistribution of political and material rewards was awarded on the basis of loyalty to the revolution.<sup>217</sup> Those who were not members of the CDR or other organizations of the revolution were considered suspicious. Particularly suspicious and even traitorous were those who, instead of claiming identity and ownership of the revolution in its grassroots manifestations, were affiliated with non-revolutionary activity, such as religious practices.<sup>218</sup> Although the formation of the vigilance system was not solely aimed at the Catholic Church, participation in religious activity was one of the undesired features monitored by the CDR. In neighborhoods and on blocks, CDR officials kept watch over those entering the local church buildings.<sup>219</sup>

As a process intertwined with the newly defined framework of revolutionary participation, the Church also demanded its followers to pledge allegiance to Catholicism and the Catholic Church in Cuba. In the heightened tension, Cuban Catholics were asked not only to confess

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211 Fagen 1969, 69–72; Pedraza 2007, 219; Pérez 2015a, 261.

212 de la Fuente 2001, 276.

213 Fagen 1969, 70–71.

214 Guerra 2012, 23.

215 Guerra 2012, 14.

216 Guerra 2012, 26.

217 Guerra 2012, 26.

218 Pedraza 2007, 216, 221, 223–224.

219 Schmidt 2015, 229.

their faith in God but also in the Church.<sup>220</sup> This, in turn, speaks well to the high stakes of the Church–State conflict. For many of the Cubans, loyalty to either the Church or the revolution was a matter of a supernatural, transcendent scale. This sentiment was echoed by the publications of the Church, by the pastoral letters by bishops, and by the private periodicals edited by Catholic groups. Occurring simultaneously with the collapse of civil society, the revolution sought to revitalize participation and belonging through consciously constructed expressions of cultural religion. Together with the rites and symbols of adoration for the revolution, the great majority of Cubans began to regard the revolution as almost deterministically defined history, and Fidel Castro’s Messiah-like presence began to build a narrative of redemption and liberation via the revolution.<sup>221</sup>

The disruption in Church–State relations reached a climax in the spring of 1961. Following the Bay of Pigs invasion in April, the failed U.S.-backed attempt to overthrow Castro, the revolution began to radicalize and aimed at establishing itself by suppressing all criticism and opposition. The external attack against the Cuban government generated more political centralization on the island, and it reinforced the vast support of Cubans for the revolution. According to Louis A. Pérez, in radicalizing the revolution after the Bay of Pigs invasion, “the government moved against anyone suspected of opposition to the regime, including priests, foreigners, and ordinary men and women.”<sup>222</sup> Detention and imprisonment were used to crush opposition, and vast numbers of Cubans left the island: between 1960 and 1962, almost 200,000 Cubans migrated to the United States. In the spring of 1961, Fidel Castro stated the socialist nature of the revolution; in November, he declared himself a Marxist-Leninist.<sup>223</sup> According to Pérez, this was neither intrinsic nor premeditated, but nevertheless came to mark the future course of the revolution as a definitive framework of life on the island.<sup>224</sup>

In 1961, the government issued a ban on religious gatherings in public spaces, including processions held in the streets.<sup>225</sup> The ban marked a concrete act of limiting the visibility of the Church in public spaces, pushing Catholics into the margins of the revolution’s frames of participation and citizenry. This was the beginning of the experience of Catholics as a physically marginalized and ostracized community in revolutionary society. Paradoxically, the marginalization aimed at decreasing the visibility of the Church and religious life in public, but the public way in which the first steps were taken ultimately marked the marginalization of the Church as a public act in and of itself.

As general opinion became more hostile towards the Church, the Holy See intervened in Cuban Church–State dialogue in order to facilitate authoritative support for the local church. In May 1961, the apostolic nuncio of the Holy See to Cuba, Luis Centoz, addressed the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Holy See and, most importantly, Pope John XXIII himself. In his letter, the nuncio referred to “the act taken against foreign clergy as well as the

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220 For instance, AHAH AC CD Asociación Caballeros Católicos de Cuba Rama A de la Acción Católica Cubana: Consejo Diocesano de La Habana, Informe del presidente diocesano a la VIII asamblea diocesana de La Habana. Surgidero de Batabanó, 20.11.1960; Con Cristo o contra Cristo 23.12.1960.

221 Guerra 2012, 17.

222 Pérez 2015a, 262.

223 Drachman 2002, 180–181; Pérez 2015a, 261–263, 265.

224 Pérez 2015a, 261–263, 265.

225 Tweed 1997, 26; Pedraza 2007, 125–126; Guerra 2012, 37; Schmidt 2015, 224–225.

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news on nationalization of private education.”<sup>226</sup> According to the correspondence, the Holy See wished to make its stance clear in the hope of the Cuban government changing its plan to take “such grave and hostile measures against the Church, that so deeply contrast [with] the Cuban people’s religious sentiments.”<sup>227</sup>

The Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations replied to Centoz’s message. The official letter of correspondence stated that while the Cuban government wished to express its regret for the concern expressed by Pope John XXIII, it also wished to make the Pope aware of the fact that his concerns were based on false information. The Ministry stated that the acts taken against foreign clergy were a response to the clergy’s abuse of Cuba’s hospitality and spirit of democracy; that the foreign clergy were to be held accountable for turning against the principles of Cuban political life and urging the people to turn against each other. The Ministry called the division sowed by the foreign clergy a fratricide among the Cuban people,<sup>228</sup> referring to the clergy’s open criticism of and opposition to the revolution and the polarization between those aligning themselves with the clergy and those committing themselves to the revolution. The letter also stated that, according to the Ministry’s estimation, this stance of the foreign clergy violated Christian morals and the teachings of the Catholic Church.<sup>229</sup>

However, in between the diplomatic communication from Cuba to the Vatican, the officials of MINREX held a round of internal correspondence discussing how to verbalize the government’s policy towards the Church. A memorandum documenting the preparation of the official response suggests that while the government found it crucial to illustrate the traitorous and counterrevolutionary nature of the Cuban Church, it also emphasized strongly that the revolution should seek dialogue and coexistence with both the Church in Cuba and the Holy See in the Vatican.<sup>230</sup> Furthermore, this singular document shows that while more numerous bodies of documental evidence still remain undisclosed, the Cuban government in fact did consider its policies on religion and saw it also as a matter of urgent attention, particularly in regard to the Holy See.

While it is sometimes suggested in scholarly works that the government only established policies on religion reactively, evidence such as this correspondence suggest that the matter was also considered in authoritative, administrative settings and formulated as policies of the revolution in a proactive manner. The memorandum is signed by President Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, which emphasizes the significance of the matter for the government: the response to the Holy See, addressing the personal reference to Pope John XXIII, required commentary from the President of Cuba at the time. Since the memorandum was prepared in the process of delivering an official response to the Holy See, it offers an outline of the government’s views and policy on Catholicism in 1961, or an outline of what the government wished to communicate on its stance towards religion.

While the document emphasizes the consistently respectful attitude of the government

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226 Las medidas que se proyecta tomar contra el clero extranjero, así como la noticia de la nacionalización de la Escuela Privada. ACMINREX SS Luis Centoz al Dr. Raúl Roa García 8.5.1961.

227 Medidas tan graves y tan hostiles a la Iglesia y que tanto contrastan con los sentimientos religiosos del pueblo cubano. ACMINREX SS Luis Centoz al Dr. Raúl Roa García 8.5.1961.

228 ACMINREX SS Proyecto de nota al nuncio apostólico.

229 ACMINREX SS Santa Sede Proyecto de nota al nuncio apostólico.

230 ACMINREX SS Memorandum al Dr. Carlos Olivares, Ref: Respuesta a Nota del Vaticano 9.6.1961.

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towards the Catholic Church, it also defined the pastoral letters of Cuban bishops and their anti-communist views as the most problematic aspect of the coexistence of Catholicism and the revolutionary government. Furthermore, as the greatest point of difference from the letter of response to the Holy See, the memorandum stated that a significant part of the clergy and laity in religious organizations were involved in counterrevolutionary and clandestine activities. For the Cuban government, it was also crucial to emphasize the consistency of revolutionary ideals with those of “original Christianity,”<sup>231</sup> from which the Cuban Church had strayed, according to the government, despite the discourse on Catholic participation in the revolution initiated by the Church in 1959. Through this reading of the sources, I concur with Guerra, who has proposed that the revolution began to appropriate Christian terminology and build the revolution’s legitimacy using the visions of Messianic redemption and the revolution as a pure spiritual and moral experience for its practitioners<sup>232</sup>, also by juxtaposing the revolution as a more authentic interpretation of Christianity than Cuban Catholicism that opposed to the revolutionary ideology.

Adding to the significance of the memorandum and the policies it outlines was the historical course of the revolution. Dated June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1961, the memorandum and the subsequent correspondence took place shortly after the Bay of Pigs invasion, which marked a turn towards public endorsement of Marxism and Soviet influence.<sup>233</sup> It is noteworthy that according to the memorandum, in the spring of 1961 the Cuban government appears to have explored opportunities of coexistence for the Church and the revolution, and it wished to have the Holy See on its side in the project. In the document, governmental officials informed the Holy See that in Cuba, freedom of religion and religious culture would be sustained and the government would adhere to coexistence with the Church on the conditions of mutual respect and the Church not interfering in political matters.<sup>234</sup> At the same time, the revolution’s frameworks for citizenry and social participation underwent radicalization, and the suffocating of resistance and opposition became a central objective of the Cuban leadership as a means of establishing a reinforced vision of internal control.<sup>235</sup>

Despite the government reassuring the Holy See of the Church’s autonomy on the island, almost immediately after the dialogue waves of nationalization swept over Catholic schools, convents, hospitals, and devotional properties in the summer of 1961.<sup>236</sup> The events led to a dramatic shift in the Catholic community’s identity. For members of religious orders, most importantly, the loss of autonomy over buildings and domains marked a loss of purpose on the most profound and existential level. Having had their ministry dedicated to serving the people at these institutions and with their day-to-day work focused on running the institutions on a practical level, the nationalization effort brought an end to their work and tasks on the island.<sup>237</sup>

Nationalization was the most concrete act limiting the domain of the Church to just worship: it laid the foundation for marginalization by not only pushing the Church concretely away

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231 ACMINREX SS Memorandum al Dr. Carlos Olivares, Ref: Respuesta a Nota del Vaticano 9.6.1961.

232 Guerra 2012, 146.

233 Guerra 2012, 135.

234 ACMINREX SS Memorandum al Dr. Carlos Olivares, Ref: Respuesta a Nota del Vaticano 9.6.1961.

235 Pedraza 2007, 115; Pérez 2015a, 261–262.

236 Conde 1999, 34–36; de la Fuente 2001, 275; Super 2003.

237 Interview 13; Interview 14; Interview 15.

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from public spaces, into the confinements of church buildings, but by also forcing Church to place a predominant emphasis on spiritual and devotional life inside the physical domains designated for worship. However, for Catholic communities, buildings also amounted to more than just walls; they were sacred spaces consecrated to God's presence. Their integrity symbolized the integrity of the community and its faith; hence, the violation of temples of worship marked a violation of the community and its spirituality, even God. A telling example of this experience is a story from a small village in the Cuban countryside and the occupation of the local church there.

The history was relayed by a Catholic layman who was a young adult at the time. After a Catholic Action group meeting one evening in the fall of 1961, the man witnessed the arrival of the revolutionary officers and the occupation of the church from which he had just exited. The Franciscan fathers serving the community were taken into custody and sent to Havana to await deportation while placed under State control in confinement. As the priests were being arrested, a crowd of lay Catholics was left to see their church put under guard to keep the villagers out. After the fathers had been placed in a car and removed from the scene, the young man went back into the church to salvage the Eucharist substance from the preceding Mass from the occupiers.<sup>238</sup>

In the sacristy, he encountered three representatives of the government, two of whom were former practicing Catholics affiliated with Catholic Action. A few years earlier, they had shared a similar social context; now the man identified the guards as revolutionaries. Yet, despite their association with the revolution, with their consent the man was allowed to retrieve the consecrated hosts from the sacristy.<sup>239</sup> The narrative suggests a certain significance of interpersonal exchange: the negotiation of identities and affiliations within the revolutionary reality, with an understanding of the complexity of identification in the midst of heated incidents and episodes in the revolution.

Despite his lay status, and the recognition that the Eucharist was administered by the clergy, the man collected the consecrated hosts from the sacristy and proceeded to the altar of the church. Laying out a corporal, as he had seen priests do,<sup>240</sup> the man held the hosts and drew a cross in the air with his hands while pronouncing the Latin words *Corpus Domini nostril Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternum. Amen.*<sup>241</sup> He then proceeded to eating the hosts, one after another, by himself. When he realized that he was unable to consume the entire container of consecrated hosts, he wrapped them in the corporal and took them with him from the church. The rest of the night the man spent summoning his lay friends, giving them the Eucharist.<sup>242</sup> When he later sought the opinion of the diocese's bishop, relaying the course of events to him, the bishop embraced the man and called him "the new Saint Tarcisius, bringing

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238 Interview 22.

239 Interview 22.

240 In 1961, priests celebrated the Mass *ad orientem*, facing the altar and not the congregation. For this reason, the young man was not entirely familiar with the liturgical gestures of the Eucharistic liturgy and imitated them to the best of his knowledge.

241 Eng. May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve your soul unto life everlasting. Amen.

242 Interview 22.

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the Eucharist to the catacombs.”<sup>243</sup> More than 60 years later, the approval of the bishop remained an emotionally meaningful memory for the layman. As he reminisced about the event and verbalized his experience, he found it important to highlight that ecclesial authorities had recognized the bravery of the act and thanked him for it.

Through the young man’s story, religion offers an insight into the ways Cubans reacted and responded to the everyday dynamics of the revolution. It is remarkable that theology provides an explanation for the meanings behind the singular act of resistance: the young man’s reaction becomes explainable only through Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist. Among Catholic sacraments, the Eucharist is seen as the most central: the Catechism of the Catholic Church<sup>244</sup> refers to it as the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Sacrament of sacraments, emphasizing its importance to faith and an individual’s communion with Christ. The Eucharist is thus also the focal point of liturgy, the mystery of salvation presented in the liturgy, and devotional life in the liturgy.<sup>245</sup> For the young man, the particular meaning of the hosts he felt compelled to consume lay in the idea of Christ’s real presence in them. He was intimately aware of the teaching that Christ was truly, in a way surpassing understanding, present in the bread and wine administered in the celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>246</sup>

The essential nature of the Eucharist for Catholic faith illuminates the reactions of the young man entering the church and eating vast amounts of consecrated hosts. When the man dedicated himself to consuming all the hosts, he acted in response to the doctrine of the Eucharist as the real presence of Christ in his church. Behind the action was his dedication to protecting the Eucharist hosts; yet the man was not protecting the hosts per se, but instead considered Christ to be present in the substance. He felt compelled to ensure that all the Eucharistic substance was consumed, since “Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species”<sup>247</sup>. Thus, the Eucharist signified Christ’s presence in the Cuban Church on that evening: when his body was kept in the church, Christ was considered present to his Church in a continuous and yet mysterious way through his sacramental presence.<sup>248</sup> That is what the layman emphasized and recapped also in his recollection: that in his state of worry he kept thinking that Christ had been left inside the church at the hands of the occupiers.

The anecdote of the occupied Christ in rural Cuba is a powerful example of how religious meaning-making became embedded in the revolutionary experience, and how the responses arising from religious and spiritual interpretations of the revolution marked the course of the revolutionary process in both a grand, all-encompassing manner and through personal, intimate and certainly dramatic acts by individuals. Cases such as this emphasize the importance of theological thought and spirituality in understanding the reactions that arose within the Church as

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241 Eres el nuevo San Tarcisio, llevando la Eucaristía por las catacumbas. Interview 22. The Roman [Catholic] Martyrology regards Saint Tarcisius as the patron saint of altar servers and first communicants. In Catholic imagery, his attributes include hosts, as the Eucharist is strongly related to the legend of Tarcisius dating to the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire in the 3rd century.

244 I refer to the Catechism of the Catholic Church published in 1972; it is currently the one most often referred to and can be cited for discussing the meaning of the Eucharist, as the doctrine on the Eucharist was not revised between the events recounted in this individual history and the publication of the Catechism of 1972.

245 CCC 1113, 1130.

246 CCC 1333.

247 Interview 22; CCC 1377.

248 CCC 1379–1380.

responses to the revolution but which were encapsulated within a logic that did not stem from the revolution. While Cuban Catholics were Cubans living the revolution, they were simultaneously, in an intertwining and inseparable way, Catholics making sense of their own personal experiences through their belief system and faith. In deepening the understanding of religious media in the revolution, the approaches of lived religion help us analyze the intrinsically Catholic manner in which individuals both received and responded to the revolution.

The relation of religious agency to temporal reality has been discussed, among others, by historian Robert Orsi. According to him, religious practice does not obliterate social contradiction or liberate humans absolutely from their place in particular social, political, and domestic arrangements.<sup>249</sup> The Cuban case further illustrates Orsi's argument by showing how religion was intrinsically intertwined in the conditions and contradictions arising in the moment. For some individuals, such as the young man standing at the altar in the middle of the night, it was religious practice precisely that tied him inseparably to the political and social arrangements of his country. In his story, the worlds of religion and revolution collided and merged: within the framework of lived religion, this is described by Orsi as an occasion in which "the religious imagination takes hold of the world in prayer, ritual, and theology, and is also itself taken hold of by the world."<sup>250</sup> This collision not only marked religion in revolution; it also signaled a microhistory, with a cosmic interpretation, of religion leaving a trace on the revolution.

In this example, the perspectives of lived religion also point to experiences of the transcendent grounded in temporal reality as a factor directing an individual's assessment of and responses to the revolution. A foundational dimension of religious meaning-making and agency suggested by the young man's story is the subjective experience of accountability with respect to the transcendent. In studies of Catholicism in Cuba, this aspect has been neglected in favor of an emphasis on the political and politicized discourse on religion in the revolution. Yet traces of spiritual interpretations of the revolution are apparent: while archival evidence inevitably fails to point out God's divine interference in history, tens of thousands of pages written by Cuban clergy and laity speak of the vision, interpretation, and desire to see and find divine intermediation in human history—to find a spiritual, faith-based meaning in the Cuban experience and to connect with those histories through religious meaning-making.

The unexplainable as an ever-present dimension of religious interpretation of the revolution claimed its authority through the way in which it was processed and transformed into patterns of thought and experience by individuals and communities in immanent realities. By portraying a steady trace of action emerging from religious meaning-making in the revolution, both documental and oral traces by Cuban Catholics map the actions of individuals as responses catalyzed by the experience of God's presence in their lives—true, concrete actions that have shaped the stories recounted as histories of the revolution. Therefore, the role of religious experience and arguments, making sense of the revolution through Christian faith, should not be neglected as a dimension of examining the revolution as it was experienced from within the religious landscapes of Cuba.

The power of the occupation of Christ as an anecdote lies in the window it opens onto the collective experiences of Catholic communities around the island. From singular events, deeper

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249 Orsi 2003, 172–173.

250 Orsi 2003, 172.

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currents and patterns emerge: through adjoining analysis, individual stories both connect with and present themselves as interchangeable elements of grander arches of historical experience.<sup>251</sup> As a microhistory of living the revolution as a Catholic, the young man's story is linked to a myriad of experiences and memories of lay Catholics on similar manners of religious affects when encountering the ethos of the revolution. The occupations, as suggested by concurring histories in chapter III, also occurred as recurring incidents in Church–State dynamics. Yet at the same time, the young man's history recaptures his agency in a specific historical and social setting, further portraying distinctive religious agency in the revolution through individuals.

The microhistory also illustrates a crucial episode of ecclesial history on the island. In 1961, the history of the young man was linked to one of the most tangible tragedies for the Church in the early years of the revolution: the deportation of all foreign priests and members of religious orders from Cuba in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion in September 1961 and the radicalization of the revolutionary ideology on the eve of the declaration by Castro as fashioning himself a Marxist-Leninist.<sup>252</sup> In a similar manner with the Franciscan fathers transported to Havana, foreign clergy and religious groups were arrested in all provinces of the island and taken to the capital. Altogether, 131 priests and members of religious orders were collected from their locations, gathered in Havana, and transported onboard the vessel *Covadonga* in September 1961. Archival records show that the deportees included 43 diocesan priests and 68 priests of religious orders. Altogether, these 111 out of a total of 131 deportees were in the ordained ministry; the remaining twenty were brothers in religious orders. The largest group of deportees (43) were diocesan priests; the largest orders with deportees were the Jesuits and Franciscans.<sup>253</sup> The departure marked a fatal blow to efforts at sustaining activities within the Church. The numbers above demonstrate the effect of the expulsion on the Church: after the deportations, a strikingly small number of approximately two hundred priests remained on the island.<sup>254</sup>

From the remaining priests, other dioceses sent those still left on the island to assume the tasks of the deportees. In that way, churches had priests and parishioners regularly convening at the sites, and the threat posed by the seizures was avoided. One of the Cuban priests resuming work on the island after the deportations recalled the conditions under which he and a fellow priest, the only two remaining in the rural region, arranged a car for themselves after vehicles had been confiscated by the State and tended to the needs of parishioners throughout the whole region for two years. Particularly challenging were Sundays, when the two priests celebrated Masses for the entire region: both of them administered up to five Masses in four villages.<sup>255</sup>

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251 For a discussion on the construction of historical knowledge with individual and anecdotal histories, see Farge 2013, 91–94.

252 Pedraza 2007, 107–110; Pérez 2015a, 262–263.

253 COCC IEC Sacerdotes y religiosos que fueron expulsados en el vapor “Covadonga” el 16 de septiembre de 1961. Archival work testifies to the way memory of the deportees is guarded in contemporary Cuba: as I discovered the complete list of deportees in the archives of the Episcopal Conference, the document was immediately retrieved and forwarded as a piece of historic evidence emerging unexpectedly, providing factual knowledge to a recurring topic in collective memory.

254 For instance, Interview 1; Interview 4; Interview 14.

255 Interview 4. The poor conditions of transportation available for clerics in Cuba were also acknowledged globally, as noted by Uriá 2011, 511.



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The account concurs with a similar memory provided by a layperson in Silvia Pedraza's study: in her rural town, a priest only visited the community twice monthly due to diminished resources for pastoral work.<sup>256</sup> Tim Padgett refers to the radical decline of resources as a measure taken by the government for "purging Cuba of its Catholic clergy as well as its Catholic enthusiasm."<sup>257</sup>

In Havana, the particular case of Enrique Boza Masvidal's deportation became a visible symbol of the rift that had formed between the Church and the State. Known as a dynamic diocesan priest who had appealed particularly to young urban adults, Cuban native Boza Masvidal had been named auxiliary bishop of Havana in May 1960. In Havana's neighborhoods and among its active laity, such as those associated with Catholic Action, Boza Masvidal was known as a face of the Church in resisting and remaining resilient against communism.<sup>258</sup> At a time when the ecclesial hierarchy seemed crippled by its own internal disputes and fear,<sup>259</sup> Boza Masvidal had been appointed to a leadership role among Havana's clergy and laity in day-to-day resistance to the revolution. His stance had become a state of normativity: resistance to the revolution expressed with an authoritative voice.

Just prior to his deportation, and undoubtedly relating to it, Boza Masvidal was the last Cuban priest to be associated with a public demonstration of faith on the streets of the island. On September 8, 1961, during the annual celebration of Cuba's *Virgen de La Caridad* festivities, the government denied Boza Masvidal permission to lead a procession with an image of the patron saint through the streets of his neighborhood. Despite the government's refusal, some 4,000 people gathered on the streets nevertheless, carrying the Virgin's image and shouting "Cuba yes! Russia no!" and "Long life Christ the King!," with both slogans clearly aimed at State authorities. The ensuing riot that broke out between the people and the police resulted in several people being wounded and one death.<sup>260</sup>

The official explanation pronounced by the government for the deportations was the expulsion of counterrevolutionary forces and political opponents from Cuba.<sup>261</sup> Many Catholics, however, immediately experienced and interpreted the deportations as religious persecution.<sup>262</sup> In oral histories, the incident at Covadonga is referred to as a watershed moment: the faithful speak of the times before and after Covadonga, with this oft repeated narrative marking a change in Church–State relations as a result of the deportation and its effect on Cuba's Catholics.<sup>263</sup> The incident at Covadonga also raises another important aspect of the confrontation for further speculation. The decision to deport all foreign clergy and religious groups from Cuba remains a paradox and an open question, a double vision into the revolutionary government's policy on religion: it remains an open question whether the restrictive acts were indeed aimed at religion and practices of faith, or at political and social dissidence that the government suspected would grow among religious groups or groups and individuals using faith as a justification for opposition.

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256 Pedraza 2007, 240.

257 Padgett 2008, 106.

258 Interview 4; Interview 9; Interview 11.

259 Interview 4.

260 Pedraza 2007, 107.

261 Fidel y la religión 1985, 239–240; Kirk 1989, 103.

262 Interview 3; Interview 4; Interview 7.

263 Interview 3; Interview 4; Interview 7; Interview 11.

## 5. Acts of Everyday Resistance

In the intense and politicized daily life of the revolution, lay organizations provided an essential reference to identity and ownership for young adult Catholics.<sup>264</sup> For many, belonging to an officially established organization created a sense of autonomy and agency<sup>265</sup>—which were also the reasons behind the growing popularity of the people's movement of support for the revolution. In the revolution of young men,<sup>266</sup> with the front men of the regime being only in their 20s and 30s, in particular Catholic laymen of a similar age also sought reference to their identities in organized associations. In this fashion, Catholic associations such as the group for young Christian workers, *Juventud Obrera Católica* (JOC)<sup>267</sup> and the youth group of Catholic Action took on a visible role in also voicing the opposition of lay Catholics towards the revolutionary ideology.

The intense participation in lay organizations was directly linked to the revolution's fascination with mass movements. Political mass rallies, appealing to large crowds, and attempting to address the nation at once were all part of Fidel Castro's maneuvers from early on.<sup>268</sup> As has been suggested by historian Louis A. Pérez, among others, control of mass organizations was an essential and early objective of the revolutionary regime. Organizations taken under the control of the State helped reinforce the revolution, mobilize great masses of people, and build social cohesion as a bottom-up process. This led to the seizure of previously existing mass organizations within the first year of the revolution and the creation of more organizations to respond to the mission of the revolution itself.<sup>269</sup>

For Catholic laity, organizations governed by the Church had formed a vital point of reference in both their identifying with the Catholic community and practicing their Catholic faith.<sup>270</sup> In the radicalized revolution, mass movements not pertaining to State control or fulfilling the mission of the revolution were considered threats to the unity of the nation.<sup>271</sup> It was under this pressure of radicalization that the Church decided to abolish JOC, one of the lay organizations most actively commenting on the revolutionary process, in early 1961. In Havana, the rapid decision to dissolve a group consisting of young adults was considered a measure of political safety both for the institutional church and its active members.<sup>272</sup>

In Latin America, JOC had been particularly prominent in social work and discourse; in Cuba, it formed a pre-eminent context for workers identifying with Catholic consciousness, and thus it represented a strong link with Catholicism for the working class.<sup>273</sup> As both Cuban archive sources show and scholarly work discusses, JOC was a socially conscious and active

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264 For instance, AHAH AC JD M Circular nacional julio de 1961; AHAH AC JD M Actividades y propaganda de carácter nacional.

265 Interview 2; Interview 29.

266 The young age of the revolutionaries and the ontological implications of youth linking with the rhetoric of change, continuity, legacy, and transition, are discussed by Pérez 2015a.

267 JOC was founded in the early 1920s by the Belgian priest Fr Cardijn. The movement gained support both in Europe and Latin America with its distinct focus on Catholic workers and the social consciousness of the laity. Lehmann 1996, 59; Alejos-Grau & Saranyana 2002, 206–207.

268 Guerra 2012, 37.

269 Pérez 2015, 261.

270 Interview 1; Interview 9.

271 Pérez 2015a, 261.

272 Interview 2.

273 Lehmann 1996, 59; Alejos-Grau & Saranyana 2002, 207.

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organization by nature, with the immediate domain of its activities situated in the public sphere of civic society.<sup>274</sup> At a time when the critiques offered by both the Cuban government and Cubans supporting the revolution were already aimed at suspicion of promoting an antirevolutionary and antipatriotic agenda, Church authorities found it impossible to continue working within JOC without raising more controversy, and possibly steering the organization's most reactive and radical members towards open conflict and counterrevolutionary activities.<sup>275</sup> Such a development was not a uniquely Cuban situation: the radicalization of JOC occurred in Brazil in the 1960s, for instance, although towards the left.<sup>276</sup>

It was Havana's archbishop, Evelio Díaz Cía, elevated to auxiliary bishop of Havana in the early moments of the revolution in 1959 and made archbishop in August 1961,<sup>277</sup> who made the decision to suspend the activities of JOC. According to a Catholic layman active in JOC in his early adulthood, Díaz gathered together the diocesan leaders of Havana's division for a meeting with the purpose of announcing that the organization would be suspended by his decision, effective immediately. As the former JOC militant reminisced, the militants of JOC found it astonishing that their organization no longer existed. It was a jolt to the core of their identities as Catholic lay militants, as JOC had provided a foundational context for their spirituality and social consciousness. The dismay was, however, compensated by the archbishop's reassurance that it was more a matter of appearance than actual agency. According to oral histories, the aim of the dissolution was to free the diocese and the members of the movement from the politicized stigma that was already associated with the most radical, socially reactive members of JOC: to gain more leverage by abolishing the structure that had become affiliated with counterrevolutionary attitudes and was under suspicion and social control by both the State and the masses.<sup>278</sup>

Even though it was Archbishop Díaz who gave the order that the group cease all activities, it was also Díaz who oversaw the continuations of the activities after the official suspension.<sup>279</sup> When the astonished youngsters asked, "where do we go now?", the answer was clear. "To local communities," affirmed the bishops, who then explained the archbishop's strategy for redirecting the social work of the committed laity. The dissolution of JOC thus did not lead to the end of activities; instead, it directed committed laypeople to exercise them in a more covert manner. With the intention of evading accusations of counterrevolutionary activities and politicized discourse among Catholic lay organizations, former lay members of JOC associated with the Archdiocese of Havana began their underground work through a small group of committed laypersons immediately after the official organization was dissolved.<sup>280</sup>

As its first mission, the group actively promoted Catholic matrimony, under direct orders

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274 AHAH AC RJ Encuesta Social de la J.O.C. mes de marzo de 1961; AHAH AC RJ Ediciones Jocistas Cubanas: Dios, patria y cultura, círculos de estudios; AHAH AC RJ Ediciones Jocistas Cubanas: Amaos; AHAH AC RJ Ediciones Jocistas Cubanas: Piedra, planta, animal...; AHAH AC RJ Ediciones Jocistas Cubanas: Soy Libre; AHAH AC RJ Vivé Martí; AHAH AC RJ Centro Nacional de Formación de Dirigentes, marzo 1961; AHAH AC RJ Alberto Cao Herrera to Ramón Casasa 18.2.1961; Bidegain 1985.

275 Interview 28; Gómez Treto 1988, 60.

276 Lehmann 1996, 60.

277 AHAH AC JD LH Circular No. 17 4/1959.

278 Interview 28.

279 Interview 28.

280 Interview 28.

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from Havana's Archbishop Díaz, as claimed by some of the young adults who participated in the work as lay activists and communicated directly with their bishop on the nature and content of the work.<sup>281</sup> From 1961 onwards, groups worked in Havana's suburban neighborhoods, visiting families and couples in order to educate them in Catholic ethics of matrimony and encourage them to commit themselves to the ideals of Catholic marriage and family life.<sup>282</sup> These activities and excursions took place in a period when the domain of the Church was already restricted and both authoritative and social forms of control over those opposing the revolutionary policies were being directed at the Church. As the case of JOC demonstrates, the directorate of the lay organization was quick to react and respond to present issues.

Large amounts of archival sources on Catholic Action in the Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Havana point to a similar conclusion on the more discreet nature of activities.<sup>283</sup> Similar activities occurred all around the island, though not all of them were directly associated with Catholic Action, even though they were all associated with the active Catholic laity. In the town of Pinar del Río, for instance, laypeople visited their church acquaintances in hospitals, formerly Catholic but then nationalized, smuggling in rosaries and little pieces of paper containing prayers or Bible verses. Laypeople prayed with patients they knew from the local Catholic community and were occasionally escorted out of the hospital if the religious nature of their visit was discovered. Clergy and nuns visited the sick in civilian clothing so as not to draw attention to their institutional affiliation to the Church.<sup>284</sup> While these acts do not compare in size to the mass events of the revolution, they do suggest a systematic approach to life as practicing Catholics. These details, examples, and singular cases in numerous towns and villages, when woven together, offer an insight into the daily life and agency of the Church at a time that has previously been mischaracterized by a paradigmatic interpretation of there being no ecclesial activities or agency.

The case of JOC, its dissolution, and the continued association with it as a matter of lay identity, together with the underground activities taken up by its former members, forms one of the most tangible examples of how the agency of the Church transformed from public to discreet following the radicalization of the revolution. Evidence presented on the transition in both archival and oral accounts challenges prevailing scholarly paradigms on the non-agency of the Church in the revolution. After public manifestations of faith were banned in 1960, Catholic education was nationalized and the properties of the Church confiscated in the course of 1960 and 1961, the agency of the Church seemed to turn inwards. In scholarship, this has often been interpreted not as a disappearance from sight, but as a state of non-existence of the Church in

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281 Interview 28.

282 Interview 28.

283 For instance, AHAH AC JN Plan de trabajo para 1961; AHAH AC JN Plan de actividades para las juntas parroquiales en formación; AHAH AC JN Acción Católica Cubana Junta Nacional, Téserera para el año 1961; AHAH AC RJ Actividades comunes as las dos ramas juveniles 1961; AHAH AC RJ Reunión del consejo nacional de la Federación de la Juventud Masculina de Acción Católica Cubana con los presidentes y secretarios generales diocesanos, Enero 14 y 15 de 1961; AHAH AC RJ Federación de la Juventud Masculina de Acción Católica Cubana y Federación de la Juventud Femenina de Acción Católica Cubana, Circular Extraordinaria No.1 22.1.1961; AHAH AC RJ AHAH JFACC Consejo Diocesano 1963/1965; AHAH AC JN De acuerdo con lo que fue indicado; AHAH AC JN Ramón Casas & Raúl Gómez Treto to Nidia García 12.1.1961; AHAH AC JN Ramón Casas & Raúl Gómez Treto to Antonio Bechily 22.2.1961.

284 Interview 14. In scholarly work, Schmidt discusses an occasion of priests being prohibited from bringing the communion to hospitalized Catholics by the revolutionary authorities. See Schmidt 2015, 232.

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Cuba: the absence and inactivity of the Catholic Church, a lack of agency and activities of the Church in the social sphere. Yet, new evidence presented in this study suggests that while approaches to activity changed, activity as such persisted.

As argued both in preceding scholarly work and confirmed by the evidence in this study, only a small percentage of formerly associated lay Catholics continued to attend church services in a regular and visible manner after the radicalization of the revolution and establishment of communist ideology. The transformation of ecclesial life from public to private also influenced the spiritual life of individuals in addition to the life of the church as an institution. As the proclaiming voice of the Church began to turn inwards, so did the spirituality of individuals still claiming Catholicism as their publicly portrayed identity amidst the social pressure.

Yet, this did not straightforwardly equal the disappearance of religiosity; while public expressions of Catholicism became diminished, religiosity and faith became more complex to measure by their intrinsic nature. The evidence presented throughout this study suggests that expressions of faith indeed transformed, yet persevered. Religious practices assumed new space and dynamics: as they were not allowed on the streets, in the public sphere of Cuban revolutionary society, churches and homes became the primary sites of religious activity. The privatization of religiosity did not equal the disappearance of Catholicism altogether: it was transformed in its very nature into a more private and intimate faith.

The mounting suspicion of and increasing vigilance against religious practices was experienced as an atmosphere of tension and fear among lay Catholics in particular. One explanation offered for the different experiences and interpretations of the clergy and laity to living the revolutionary reality is the difference in location and engagement in civic life. In interviews, some of the laypeople made the remark that while the clergy and members of religious orders resided with one another and clearly within the Church, laypeople were living on the borderline between the Church and revolutionary society in their daily lives. As some of those in the laity, balancing between the Church and the State, bitterly remarked, it was in some sense easier for ordained clergy and religious orders to choose their side since the choice was already made for them.<sup>285</sup>

Daily life in the revolution was, as noted by many lay Catholics, more complex for those who led civic lives that involved education, career, offspring, economic concerns, and daily interactions in addition to, apart from, and ultimately also entangled with their Catholic commitment. Laypeople were not only Catholics but also individuals with families and educational and professional trajectories within the revolutionary reality, and the civic expectations and engagements of their everyday lives were not located solely in the interiors of the Church.<sup>286</sup> While the narrative portrayed a simplified image of the clergy and religious orders as isolated from civic society, which was certainly not the case with, for instance, priests working in local communities and religious orders committed to service in schools and hospitals, it must be taken into account exactly because of its significance as a narrative of reality perceived by those recounting it.

In the atmosphere of social cohesion, compliance, and normative commitment to the revolution, revolutionary leaders issued a call for comprehensive revolutionary morality of

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285 Interview 17; Interview 19; Interview 25.

286 Interview 7; Interview 9; Interview 14; Interview 19.

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personal courage and passion with unwavering faith in and support for the revolution. Fidel Castro and his comrades urged Cubans to choose their sides in the moral struggle of the revolution, and to manifest their support via public acts, such as taking oaths to defend the revolution, participating in mass events, and maintaining daily vigilance for suspected opposition and threats to national unity.<sup>287</sup>

As sociologist Silvia Pedraza notes, the rapidly escalating revolutionary process created a conflict in the everyday experience of Cubans. According to Pedraza, “it [the conflict] was lived in people’s daily lives, as Cuban families became divided between those who supported the revolution, becoming integrated to it, and those who rejected it, taking the road to exile.” Furthermore, Pedraza suggests that “for many Cubans, their allegiance to the Church was at the center of that decision.”<sup>288</sup> This complex conflict of political alignments, religious affiliations, class, race, and personal emotions provides an explanation for why “a disproportionate number of Cubans in the first wave of exodus to the United States in the first years of the revolution were Catholics,” as argued by Tweed.<sup>289</sup> On the island, the exodus of middle-class Catholics provides insight into why the Church “did not serve as a long-term institutional base for opposition to the revolution,” as proposed by Crahan.<sup>290</sup>

One particular domain in which religion, politics, and the exodus of Cubans came together in the revolution was the family. As archival sources, oral histories, and previous scholarship show, Cuban families’ commitment to Catholicism was directly connected to the politics of the family in the revolution. Through the central role of the family as a theological and pastoral concept, as well as through the role of education and charity, the Church had a historically established deep engagement with children and the family, which became subject to inevitable change by the new take on the role of the family in the revolutionary society and the revolution’s role in the family.<sup>291</sup>

In the first years of revolutionary rule, the educational reforms, executed at a furious pace, shaped the domain of Catholicism not only in public discourse and space but in the domestic sphere as well. As the reform of education transformed the curricula of Cuban schools to comply with the revolution’s frameworks, families critical of the course of the revolution and its ideology became concerned.<sup>292</sup> On the streets, rumors spread that parents would become subordinate to the State,<sup>293</sup> in light of the Catholic doctrine on the family and the autonomy of parents, the threat appeared unbearable. Casavantes Bradford also points out the input by the anti-Castro exile media in Miami in encouraging and supporting the resistance of Catholics to the revolutionary politics on childhood and the family.<sup>294</sup>

Catholic groups actively promoted the Church’s teaching on the family and attempted to counter the revolution’s politics on childhood and the family by emphasizing the threat of

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287 Guerra 2012, 136, 138, 143.

288 Pedraza 2007, 109.

289 Tweed 1997, 30.

290 Crahan 1985.

291 For instance, AHAH AC JN COF La Familia Cristiana es Celula Fundamental en La Iglesia; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 71, 73–74, 83, 88–90.

292 Conde 1999, 34–36; Pedraza 2007, 81; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 107; Casavantes Bradford 2016, 284.

293 Conde 1999, 40; Pedraza 2007, 81, 84; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 126, 164.

294 Casavantes Bradford 2014, 164.

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communism to the upbringing of Cuban children as atheists.<sup>295</sup> In December 1960, for example, the national committee of Catholic Action, supported by the auxiliary bishop José M. Domínguez, issued an instruction for lay Catholics to remain united in the Catholic defense of the family, as “the rights of the family, as such, and the rights of parents as the primary educators of their children are the rights that all Catholics must defend and acknowledge, if we wish to accomplish the re-Christianization of the Cuban family and true progress of the *patria*.”<sup>296</sup>

The Catholic resistance to the revolutionary politics on the family took many forms. Not only was the Virgin Mary prayed to for intervention in the revolutionary politics on childhood and parenthood;<sup>297</sup> the unrest of Catholic families resulted also in concrete action that simultaneously channeled personal, familiar, religious, and political motivations.<sup>298</sup> While militant lay Catholics engaged in public activities to promote a Christian understanding of the family,<sup>299</sup> large numbers of Cuban Catholics opted to leave the island instead. The waves of immigration in the early 1960s resulted in a shift in religious agency and experience from Cuba towards the United States in both the public discourse regarding the nexus of religion and politics, and consequently, in scholarly work historicizing the role of religion in the revolution.

Among the most covered episodes in scholarly work on Cuban Church–State relations is the U.S.-supported, covertly executed mass exodus of more than 14,000 unaccompanied Cuban children to the United States between 1960 and 1962, later known as Operation Peter Pan (*Operación Pedro Pan*). As the scholarly work has established, Cuban Catholics and the Church on the island participated in the operation by, first, constituting the predominant group of Cuban families who decided to send their children away from the island and, second, by facilitating the departure of the children.<sup>300</sup> According to Yvonne Conde, safeguarding the religious heritage of the children was “one of the chief reasons parents were sending their children into exile.”<sup>301</sup> In the United States, the operation was assisted by the Catholic Welfare Bureau, through which it became intertwined also with the Cuban Children’s Program instituted for the care of unaccompanied Cuban children in the United States, many of whom were never reunited with their parents. The program was strongly marked by a religious foundation, as the children were cared for in a manner that supported their family’s religious heritage.<sup>302</sup> In this manner, Catholicism was inextricably linked with the experiences of the Cuban children sent to the

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295 For instance, AHAH AC JN M Mensaje de la Presidenta, julio-agosto 1960; DM 12.1.1960 La Semana de la Familia Cristiana; DM 15.1.1950 No puede llamarse cristiana la justicia social que no respete el fuero familiar; Interview 5; Interview 11.

296 Los derechos de la familia como tal y los derechos de los padres como primeros educadores de sus hijos, son los que todos los católicos han de defender y conocer si queremos llegar a la rechristianización de la familia cubana y al verdadero progreso de la Patria. AHAH AC JN COF “Por la familia hacia un mundo mejor” 12/1960.

297 AHAH AC JD M Cruzada de la Oración a Jesús por María. Una moderna campaña de oración bajo la inspiración de la Virgen de la Caridad, Patrona del Pueblo de Cuba; AHAC AC JD M A Jesús por María: Esta familia es miembro de la Cruzada de la Oración; AHAH AC JD M Cruzada de la Oración: Oración; AHAH AC JD M Cruzada de la Oración: Promesa; Interview 11; Interview 28.

298 For instance, AHAH AC JN COF La Familia Cristiana es Celula Fundamental en La Iglesia.

299 For instance, DM 2.1.1960 Organízase la Semana de la Familia Católica para enero; DM 7.1.1960 Conferencias por el “Día de la Sagrada Familia” en Santiago; DM 10.1.1960 Se inicia hoy la Semana de la Familia con varios actos.

300 Conde 1999, 49–54; Pedraza 2007, 81–84; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 126–127, 129; Casavantes Bradford 2016, 284.

301 Conde 1999, 53.

302 Conde 1999, 49–54; Pedraza 2007, 81–84; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 126–127, 129.

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United States, from their departure from home to their arrival and first encounters in the United States.<sup>303</sup>

No documental sources directly addressing the operation were available for consultation in the archives of the Catholic Church, either because they did not exist or were classified. In oral histories, the topic was actively brought up by only a few interviewees. The overarching claim in oral histories was that the Cuban Church as an institution was not directly involved in the planning and organization of the operation; that it was the input of singular Catholic individuals, clergy, and members of religious orders who acted as independent mediators for the Catholic families involved in the process, assisting them in arranging departure from the island. According to the interviewees, Catholic priests and members of religious orders often acted as the links connecting Cuban families to the operation and helped to organize their travels. Some of the interviewees proposed that the hierarchy of the Church was not explicitly aware of the organized nature of the exodus, while others claimed that the bishops both knew and addressed the issue internally. According to them, although the majority of the bishops tried to control the exodus of the unaccompanied Catholic children, some added to the unrest of the parents through their rapidly escalating fear of communism and rejection of the revolutionary government, consequently supporting the parents in their decision to send the children away.<sup>304</sup>

On the island, the role of Catholicism in the exodus of both the unaccompanied children and entire families made visible the interconnectedness of religion—both private and public—politics, and the revolution on both domestic and transnational levels and brought to the surface the webs of historical connections and the continued Catholic exchange between Cuba and the United States. This further led to the Church being portrayed as a counterforce to the revolution via its alignment with the hegemony of the United States and the fierce attempts to overturn the revolutionary rule in Cuba. Through these aspects, the mass exodus of the children and its Catholic connection contributed remarkably to the public image of the Church in the revolution.

The exodus of the unaccompanied children, its origins, and its consequences were rarely addressed publicly by the Church in Cuba after the operation ended in 1962. Within the institutional church, it became a historical non-topic discussed more through the experiences of the Peter Pan children and their families in the United States and less of an intra-ecclesial issue on the island. Casavantes Bradford argues that the frameworks of remembrance regarding the operation, as well as the meanings given to the exodus of the children, have provided two opposing narratives on both sides of the Florida Straits, emerging from the historical processes of public remembrance and the politics of memory among Cubans on the island and in the United States.<sup>305</sup> Religion constitutes one of the aspects that has shaped the memories and the politics of remembrance. As the multilayered experiences and consequences of Operation Peter Pan show, religion and revolutionary politics were intertwined at simultaneously public and private, as well as deeply emotional, levels in the course of the lives of Cuban individuals, families, and communities both in the United States and on the island.

One of the issues that this study wishes to draw attention to is the lived experience of Cuban Catholics living the revolution on the island. In scholarly work, a recurring narrative in

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303 Casavantes Bradford 2014, 197.

304 Interview 1; Interview 3; Interview 4; Interview 11.

305 Casavantes Bradford 2016, 285–286.



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writing the history of Cuban Catholicism, even within the historiographical framework of the revolution, is that of the exile perspective. Regarding Catholicism and Cuban Catholics, scholars have constructed more histories of those who left than of those who stayed. Furthermore, in studies of the revolution, the dichotomy between Catholics who left and revolutionaries who stayed on the island provides a repeated explanation for the negation of religiosity on the island, in the revolutionary course of lives and society.<sup>306</sup>

In this narrative, the waves of exodus are employed as markers turning the religious perspective to Cubans in diaspora and the production of religious meanings through the experience of exile. This, correspondingly, carries with it the risk of overemphasizing the diaspora as the sole locus of religiosity, suggesting that the only, or more authentic, valuable, or meaningful sites for religious expression were located outside the island; that the revolution contributed to dictating the framework for sustained religiosity through the exile experience. This overemphasis occurs at the cost of overshadowing Cuban Catholics expressing and practicing religion on the island, within the revolutionary reality both according to and against the revolutionary framework for social behavior and everyday life.

In addition, the exile narrative places religious exodus into juxtaposition with Cubans distancing themselves from the Church on the island. Although the perspective is correct in the sense that a large number of Catholics left the island in opposition to the revolution, which was in great part linked with religious convictions linked with political opinions, the narrative allows little to no space for the Catholics who stayed in Cuba and led their lives within the revolutionary reality without committing themselves to its ideology or meeting its requirements. Simple binaries of revolutionaries staying and Catholics leaving do a disservice to the complex histories of Cubans on the island who continued to identify either as Catholics, or even as Catholics and revolutionaries simultaneously. As the histories of individual Catholics and Catholic communities on the island presented in this research show, on a grassroots level the categories were sometimes blurred in the day-to-day pulse of life as individuals attempting to make sense of strict categories, social norms, and policies were also balancing between several identities and intertwining roles. Some resisted social participation, whereas others succumbed to following the revolution's social norms while still maintaining an inner sense of self in relation to their Catholic faith.

On the island, the Cuban laity found themselves in a pressurized social environment set on reinforcing the revolution in 1961. The strong moral consensus on supporting the revolution was built, simultaneously and concurrently, through both top-down and bottom-up processes. The moral imperative for citizens to express their support for the revolution also created the appearance of vast public support. While codes of conduct and expectations for citizens were introduced by the regime, the masses also both embraced the revolution and joined the public consensus for demonstrating their loyalty. The idea of showing unconditional support for the revolution was a prerequisite for good citizenry and, paradoxically, also an aspect of the revolution's unconditional power as demonstrated by the masses themselves. Mass rallies, for instance, created the image of a unified nation, and they created both the will and the moral imperative for individuals to demonstrate their participation in the nation's joint project.<sup>307</sup>

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306 The exile perspectives are discussed by, for example, Crahan 1979; Tweed 1997; Pérez 2015a, 264.

307 Guerra 2012, 37–38, 75–76, 92–100.

### III THE TIME OF CONTESTATION: 1959–1961

In this complex dynamic of public perception and political planning, it had been easy for the regime to introduce the idea of constant peer observation to the people, and for people to approve of the idea. In order to secure the foundation of the revolution, it was in the regime's interest to keep close watch on opposition and dissidence. Correspondingly, given the heightened requirements for morally approving of and supporting the revolution, it became logical for people to monitor their daily surroundings for signs of disloyalty to the revolution. As discussed in the interviews, for Catholics this resulted in daily monitoring of their social lives, expressions, and religious practices in neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces.<sup>308</sup>

Many of the laity felt they had limited space for making ideological and even emotional observations in the tense atmosphere revolving around mass approval of the new social order. Lay Catholics found themselves in the middle of a conflict of ideologies and daily life<sup>309</sup>—and it was exactly the experience of the laity that marked the Catholic experience of living the revolution at the junction of highly politicized day-to-day life and social interaction. Many found this degrading and shameful, which for some transferred into their sentiments regarding religion. “I thought my faith was something to be ashamed of,” a layperson remarked as she recalled distancing herself from the local Catholic community in the hostile environment in which she led her daily life.<sup>310</sup>

This complexity provides an explanation for why, amidst the constant peer pressure and social control, working-age adults were the first to stop attending the Mass and other functions of the Church. In the oral histories, fear surfaced repeatedly as the catalyst for working-aged adults choosing to no longer participate in the Church. In the histories that were recounted by laypeople who experienced the alienation themselves, such fear took different forms. For some, it was fear of social ostracism or marginalization as undesired members of the society, becoming “second- or third-class citizens,” as phrased by those within the Church.<sup>311</sup> For others, the cause of fear was the government and its forced control through the threat of arrest and imprisonment. Fear of losing one's social status also surfaced in the interviews: losing educational or professional opportunities, losing credibility at work or in social circles, or losing social or economic benefits in everyday life.<sup>312</sup> All of these fears were linked to peer monitoring and pressure as much as they were to the ideology of the revolution. In all of the reasons given, Catholic identity was portrayed as a state of undesired otherness in the revolutionary reality.

The reasons for people distancing themselves from the Church varied from fear of to a sense of euphoria for the revolution. In interviews, some admitted they were initially drawn to the ideas of the revolution and found Catholicism contradictory to them. Others argued that while they never ceased to believe and practiced religion privately, they experienced the pressures of the mounting contradictions and hostility in Church–State relations and thought it better to not visibly affiliate themselves with the Church. Some of these individual histories contained accounts of personal, emotional struggles and remorse for having left the Church. Some of the laypeople later returned to actively practicing Catholicism, while others kept their

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308 Interview 18.

309 Interview 1; Interview 10; Interview 18; Interview 20; Interview 30.

310 Interview 19.

311 Interview 1; Interview 2; Interview 3; Interview 4; Interview 7; Interview 9; Interview 10; Interview 11; Interview 14; Interview 17; Interview 18; Interview 20; Interview 22; Interview 29.

312 Interview 10; Interview 11; Interview 18.

distance.<sup>313</sup>

As the interviews conducted for this research suggest, the individual histories of Catholics, clergy, and laity alike provide a sense of understanding and empathy for this course of events. Recognizing the choice individuals felt forced to make, most of the clergy and laypeople interviewed for this study expressed their understanding for those who distanced themselves from the Church. Some of the interviewees had even experienced the process of alienation from and return to the Church themselves, and they testified to having ultimately received understanding and empathy from both the clergy and laity for their choices. One of the interviewees recollected the responses of the community as a silent understanding and acceptance of a difficult decision made in a highly pressurized environment.<sup>314</sup>

Yet, different kinds of stories of living the revolution as Catholics also emerged from the social exclusion: histories of resistance, resilience, and daily acts of defying the frameworks set by the revolution. Remarkably, many of these cases, frequently repeated with individual variations from neighborhood to neighborhood, from Catholic family to Catholic family, placed women<sup>315</sup> at the center of religious agency and authority. Whereas the course of the revolution had been commented on and contested by young Catholic men, both in the clergy and among the laity, many of those voices had been lost either through acts restricting the public domain of the Church or the migration from Cuba of formerly active Catholic laymen. In the revolution of young men, the new situation of the Church placed senior citizens, particularly elderly women, *abuelas*, in a position of agency and authority for transmitting religious identity and practices in cross-generational exchange. As young men became an increasingly inactive and rare representation of the Church, women assumed more agency and autonomy in ecclesial life. It is remarkable that these histories are recounted and narrated as histories of female agency in the domestic sphere.

For young female adults, imitation of Mary in all the virtues of her life was a central focus of spirituality. Young women were also appointed agency in domestic religiosity, as they were, for instance, encouraged to promote praying the rosary within families.<sup>316</sup> Relating to womanhood and motherhood, Cuban Catholic laywomen were tasked with preserving religious identities and practices in changing social settings and amidst the changing social roles and expectations of women in the revolution. In Catholic expressions and practices, women and the elderly assumed increasing autonomy for cross-generational transmission of religious beliefs and values. Jalane D. Schmidt remarks a similar pattern in the devotion for the Virgin Mary in Cuba, particularly among women.<sup>317</sup> According to Schmidt, “most devotees recount that they first learned of this Marian advocacy from their mothers, grandmothers, or other female relatives, inside the domestic, tacitly female-gendered private sphere of the home.”<sup>318</sup>

A powerful example of Marian devotion as an expression of resistance was the Crusade of Prayer, *Cruzada de la Oración*, which Cuban families were invited to join in 1961. Catholic

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313 Interview 15; Interview 18; Interview 20; Interview 26; Interview 30.

314 For instance, Interview 18; Interview 19.

315 It is noteworthy that the Cuban government initiated a similar process. According to Padula & Smith, the threat of a counterrevolution led to the systematic mobilization of women in 1960 and 1961 and women joining the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution and the literacy campaign. See Padula & Smith 1985, 82.

316 AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín Trimestral: Cuestionario Octubre-Noviembre-Diciembre 1965.

317 Schmidt 2015, 241–242.

318 Schmidt 2015, 3.

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Action distributed prayer cards with the image of *La Virgen de La Caridad* to laypeople, who were also asked to publicly announce their participation in the campaign: the card proudly announced that “this family is a member of the Crusade of Prayer.” Participants were both encouraged to pray with their family members and promised prayer services by members of the community. In Christian terminology, the cards appealed to the importance of prayer for human salvation: “The one who prays, will be saved; the one who does not pray, will be condemned.”<sup>319</sup> At the same time, making use of revolutionary rhetoric, the cards framed the resistance required from Catholics, declaring: “With God, everything; without God, nothing.”<sup>320</sup> The words directly referenced and rephrased Fidel Castro’s famous framing of the revolution’s accepted discourse and social participation: “Inside the revolution, all; outside the revolution, nothing.”<sup>321</sup>

In the histories of Cuban laypeople and clerics, dating back to their childhood, an oft-repeated story is the one of grandmothers bearing the responsibility for religious education at home. When working-age adults distanced themselves from the Church, children and retired grandparents became the key actors in sustaining religiosity and religious practices through informal domestic piety.<sup>322</sup> In an interview a laywoman who had grown up in Havana in the early 1960s, she recounted the posture of the grandmother of the family in manifesting religion amidst the revolutionary realities of life. When her parents stopped attending their local church in order to maintain a credible profile in their work and peer relations, the grandmother of the family assumed the role of a religious authority. As the woman reminisced: “My grandmother told me she had nothing to lose. She couldn’t lose her job, she couldn’t lose face, she couldn’t lose her credibility in front of her peers. That’s why she took me to church and not my parents.”<sup>323</sup>

A little girl at the time, the woman was among the many to experience the revolution through infantile religiosity. For children, the nationalization of education and the new revolutionary ideology introduced also at school posed a difficult challenge for sustaining a religious identity. In these moments, grandmothers became the keepers of religiosity in the family. As in the case of this little girl, her mother wondered whether it would be better to save her child from public profiling as a Catholic. Yet, the grandmother insisted on public witnessing and continued to attend the neighborhood church with her granddaughter:

My mother told her mother, my grandmother, that she should take me to the church through the other, more discreet door. When we approached the church, my grandmother and I, she held my hand and said, “We’re going in through the front door, so that the whole world sees us arriving!”<sup>324</sup>

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319 AHAH AC JD M Cruzada de la Oración a Jesús por María. Una moderna campaña de oración bajo la inspiración de la Virgen de la Caridad, Patrona del Pueblo de Cuba; AHAC AC JD M A Jesús por María: Esta familia es miembro de la Cruzada de la Oración; AHAH AC JD M Cruzada de la Oración: Oración; AHAH AC JD M Cruzada de la Oración: Promesa.

320 AHAH AC JD M Cruzada de la Oración a Jesús por María.

321 In Spanish: *Dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada*. The words were pronounced by Fidel Castro in June 1961 during a speech to the Cuban intellectuals.

322 The term is employed by Tweed (1997) discussing Catholic spirituality and devotion to *Virgen de La Caridad* in the Cuban American diaspora in Miami.

323 Mi abuela me dijo que no tiene nada que puede perder. No puede perder su trabajo ni su cara, no puede perder su credibilidad ante los otros. Por eso ella me llevó a la Misa, no mis padres. Interview 12.

324 Mi mamá le dijo a su mamá, mi abuela, que ella tiene que llevarme a la misa por la otra puerta más discreta en la iglesia. Cuando llegamos mi abuela y yo, ella me cogió de la mano y me dijo: “Vamos a entrar por la puerta principal, para que todo el mundo nos vea llegando.” Interview 12.

As remembered by practicing Catholics, Sunday Masses became a scene of public performance in social control. Since those entering the church were labelled traitors of the revolution, the act of participation began to be perceived as an act of disloyalty as well.<sup>325</sup> On Sunday mornings, sometimes crowds were waiting for churchgoers with rocks, sticks, and rods. Masses were interrupted by invasions and shouts from the streets, and gatherings outside the church became a regular activity for opponents of the Church on Sundays.<sup>326</sup> Similar histories discussed in several pieces of scholarly work point towards the recurring nature of the events everywhere on the island.<sup>327</sup>

Yet in interviews, laypeople of various ages and social contexts also explored manifestations of public resistance to the mounting social control, peer monitoring, and cohesion of the masses in compliance with norms of the revolution. As the examples recalled by laity also suggest, on city blocks and in neighborhoods, a frequently repeated microhistory within the daily social spheres of life was that of senior citizens assuming agency and autonomy not only in transmitting religiosity, but also in gestures of everyday resistance. One powerful anecdote had to do with the audacity of a grandmother in Havana:

In our neighborhood, people hid religious items in their houses. They put them ... out of sight, things like images of Jesus and the Virgin, statues and crosses and rosaries ... so that no one would see they still had them. But my grandmother, she put the Virgin to stand by the window. She put an image of Jesus next to the door. "Open the windows," she would say. "Open the windows and let them see what we have here!"<sup>328</sup>

In the daily performance of the revolution, several processes of religious identification occurred simultaneously. While some began to remove religious objects from their homes, others put them by the window. Another category of these histories has to do with the visible signs of religiosity hidden from the public eye yet preserved in the private sphere. In the homes of Cubans, in the pantry, behind groceries, one might encounter a statue of Jesus. From a chest of drawers, an image of the Virgin or a rosary would be taken out and kissed in a moment of despair. These histories also suggest that the confrontation of ideologies was, on a deeply personal level, a conflict of emotions. Lay Catholics were actively involved in what they considered a battle, a fight between good and evil as they perceived it.<sup>329</sup> In Havana, teenagers in Catholic Action emphasized their readiness to "show the Cuban youth that there are youngsters ready to dedicate their life and death to practicing an ideal of perfection and sanctity."<sup>330</sup>

These examples also point to grassroots resistance to and resilience in the face of the demands for loyalty and commitment to the revolution at the cost of abandoning other identities

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325 Interview 1; Interview 3; Interview 4; Interview 18; Interview 26; Interview 27; Interview 28.

326 Interview 11; Interview 12; Interview 18; Interview 28.

327 See Pedraza 2007, 108; Chase 2015, 182–182.

328 En nuestro barrio la gente escondió las imágenes religiosas en sus casas. Las pusieron... fuera de vista, cosas como imágenes de Jesús y La Virgen, estatuas y cruces y rosarios... Para que nadie vea que todavía tengan estas cosas. Pero mi abuela, ella puso la Virgen en la ventana. Ella puso la imagen de Jesús al lado de la puerta principal. 'Abran las ventanas', nos dijo. '¡Abran las ventanas para que todo el mundo vea lo que está aquí!' Interview 9.

329 DM 19.4.1959 La cooperación entre la Iglesia y el Estado; Interview 14; Interview 18; Interview 20.

330 AHAH AC RJ Federación de la Juventud Masculina de Acción Católica Cubana y Federación de la Juventud Femenina de Acción Católica Cubana, Circular Extraordinaria No.1 22.1.1961

and agencies. Historian Lillian Guerra makes a similar remark, identifying “pockets of debate” within the non-existing, already-crumbling Cuban civil society of 1961, in which individuals were still in charge of “influencing alternate forms of identity-building in the public sphere.” As these histories of Catholics also suggest, even though the stories were, according to Guerra, silenced or covered over by the predominant revolutionary narrative,<sup>331</sup> they existed in their time as true experiences for individuals crafting the contesting acts of grassroots resistance in their daily lives.

As the individual histories presented in this chapter suggest, in the intensity of revolutionary fervor an item as small as a statue, a rosary, or an image on the wall came to mark a line drawn between ideologies. Sometimes resistance was portrayed publicly, by grandmothers taking their offspring to the church through the front door, while sometimes it was a private manifestation of self-assurance materializing in an object as small as a rosary. These acts of daily defiance against complying wholly with the performance of the revolution shed light on the emotional landscapes of ordinary people whose lives had become intertwined with and entangled in the grand currents sweeping over and within the nation, becoming a collective experience of the moment. They also speak to the intimacy of the experience: the deeply personal meanings given to acts of faith and religiosity in quotidian objects such as rosaries and prayer cards.

Yet the cohesion built among the masses, fueled by the government’s requirement for absolute support, left little room for publicly contrasting ideas. Simultaneously, grassroots mechanisms of social control began to increase and citizens began monitoring each other closely for possible disloyalty to the revolution. In the daily life of constant observation and monitoring, the experience of lay Catholics was one setting them apart from others in the already crumbling civil society. In the established culture of conformity and compliance with the revolution, Catholics found themselves in the middle of contesting ideologies and the highly pressurized daily conditions of life. In 1961, in the radicalized revolution, it was no longer possible to be a Catholic and a revolutionary at the same time. Individuals were left to choose, and the factors weighing on the choice were not only ideological but also concerned the physical, psychological, and social wellbeing and safety of individuals and families, as vividly recalled by many.

## 6. Discussion

This chapter traced the origins and foundations of Catholic agency in the revolution, discussing the multitude of manners and agencies through which both the institutional church and individual Catholics were deeply invested in influencing the course of the revolution. From a distinctively Catholic perspective, one drawing on the social doctrine of the Church and the legacy of socially conscious lay agency, the Church attempted to negotiate a Catholic interpretation of the revolution and claimed legitimacy for participating in the discourse on the future of the revolution.

Following voices of both the clergy and laity, those higher up in the hierarchy and at the grassroots level, the chapter showed how the mounting perception of communist influence put the Church on the defensive. The increasingly tight frameworks for social participation, peer

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331 Guerra 2012, 31.

### III THE TIME OF CONTESTATION: 1959–1961

pressure, and requirements for unconditional support for the revolutionary process contributed to Cubans redefining their identities as revolutionaries and Catholics. During the radicalization phase, religion became a polarizing issue in the grand narrative of the revolution: as Catholicism became associated with counterrevolutionary stances, treason against the fatherland, and opposition to the revolutionary leadership, both public identification with the Church as well as expressions and performance of faith declined. With the deportation of foreign clergy and religious orders, and the nationalization of Catholic schools and hospitals, both the resources and social domains of the Church collapsed. At the same time, histories of the everyday resistance of Catholics to the revolutionary process, as well as histories of compliance with the social norms of the revolution, began to emerge.

In historicizing the Church's relations with the regime, the conflicting incidents of the first years of the revolution have been among the examples most often discussed: with easily accessible documental evidence, these kinds of events have remained among the most historicized and discussed signs of confrontation. Mapping concrete, physical acts of frustration and violence has remained more accessible than charting how the deeper undercurrents of thoughts, emotions, and ideas of Catholics became intertwined during the messy phase of the revolution. For decades, histories of the Church–State encounter in the early stages of the revolution have been constructed through the lens of conflict and polarization; they are based on fragments from the media coverage of physical conflicts, arrests, and imprisonments and on wars of words between the leadership of the Church and the revolution in published sources.

In scholarly work, the consequences of the seizure of the Cuban media in 1960 have been felt in the lack of sources reaching beyond the disappearance of publications and voices of civil society. This has further reinforced the role of both archival sites and memory, which has not yet made it any easier for scholars to access sufficient bodies of primary sources. In later scholarly understandings of the revolution, building on fragmentary sources and voices to establish a history of the Church in Cuba, this narrative of sporadic, almost photographic incidents in the first years of revolutionary rule has been accepted and established as a paradigmatic frame of historical knowledge on the Church in the revolution, despite the evolving dynamics within both the Church and State, and most importantly, in the interplay of the two. The lack of access to cohesive bodies of primary sources produced by the Church, with little theological resources to analyze the deeper and more complex currents of the dynamics and discourse from the Church's perspective, and Cuba's self-imposed silence on the revolution's ambiguous histories have reinforced this historiography.

The newly presented primary sources of this chapter point towards critical remarks about the construction of historical knowledge in scholarly work, challenging scholarly perceptions of the Church in the revolution that have remained rooted in the historiography regarding the revolution's earliest stages and the Cuban State's production of historical knowledge. While more recent attempts to re-historicize the revolution and critically analyze the historiography of scholarly writing on the revolution have discussed the continuing prevalence of the early schools of Cuban history, they have not touched on religious history and its disappearance from both Cuban revolutionary historiography and the scholarly study of it. This chapter has thus also issued an invitation to scholars to re-examine the production of historiographical knowledge on religion via and after the messy phase of the revolution.

## IV TESTIMONY OF LIFE: 1962–1968

### 1. Vatican II in Cuba

The nature of the revolution changed essentially after the radicalization period. The new focal point for vigilance and rebuttal was the enemy from within. Internal resistance and opposition amounted to treason. Also, forms of criticism shifted: the revolution could only be criticized from within, through commitment to the process, with anything else amounting to counterrevolutionary activity.<sup>1</sup> In this environment, it became increasingly harder to navigate between the expectations of the new *patria* harbored in the first years of the revolution by Catholics, the contemporary political, economic, and social realities of the Marxist-Leninist revolution, and the traditions of both *la cubanidad* and Catholicism that daily life had built on.

In 1962, both the clergy and laity in Cuba were adjusting to the new trails of thought and expression; the Cuban Church was under pressure to embrace changes from both within and outside of it. After the radicalization of the revolution, the rupture between the old and the new became a painful stretch for Catholics in both the political frameworks and the everyday of Cuba. At the same time, the landscapes of theology and pastoral work also began to change in global Catholicism as Vatican II, convening from 1962 to 1965, and recurring encounters with the modern world brought changes to the life of the Church.<sup>2</sup> In this development, the case of Cuba served as both an example of and a response to Catholicism as it faced modernity in the form of political and social upheaval.

The reception and interpretation of Vatican II in Cuba, its impact spanning several decades and ranging from ecclesial to social realities, remains an understudied topic in scholarly work on both Catholicism and the Cuban revolution. Preceding scholarly work has stressed the low impact of the most significant ecclesial event in modern times from Cuba's perspective: a persistent narrative has prevailed that the institutional church in Cuba was indifferent to, or isolated from, the course of Vatican II during the convening of the conciliar sessions from 1962 to 1965. In this paradigm, the council had little if any relevance for its contemporaries in Cuba. An established claim in scholarship, one that I partially include in this study, is that in Cuba, the processes of reception and implementation of the council were realized only decades later.<sup>3</sup>

Both archival and oral sources discuss the profound significance of the council as a contemporary process for the Church in Cuba. Interviews with clergy, seminarians, and laity living through the effects of the council in Cuba show that the Cuban Church engaged in parallel processes of reception, study, and interpretation of the council. Correspondingly, archival documentation shows that diocesan councils and groups of clergy began to apply the renewed teachings in practice already mid-council.<sup>4</sup> Correspondence from diocesan houses to lay leaders, from the episcopate to the clergy, and from the clergy to the laity show that the ideas

1 Amaro 1981, 59; Pedraza 2007, 111.

2 Coppa 2008, 169.

3 For the low impact of Vatican II in Cuba, see Crahan 1985, Gómez Tréto 1988, Kirk 1989. Regarding the implementation of conciliar ideas in the Cuban Church in the 1970s, the paradigm has been presented in works by Crahan 1985, Kirk 1989, and Tejada 1999.

4 For instance, AHAH AC JN Fernando Azcárate to Raúl Gómez Treto 10.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Concilio Euménico Vaticano: Resumen y perspectivas 10.2.1966; Interview 2; Interview 4; Interview 6; Interview 23; Interview 24.



#### IV TESTIMONY OF LIFE: 1962–1968

of the council were discussed and tested on the island while the council fathers were still in debate in the Vatican.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, as several working sessions in the Vatican were attended by the bishops Domínguez of Matanzas, Rodríguez Herrera of Camagüey, and Rodríguez Rozas of Pinar del Río and the auxiliary bishop Fernando Azcárate of Havana as well as Ríu Angles, the former bishop of Matanzas, first-hand information arrived on the island in the intermediate phases of the council.<sup>6</sup> As witnesses to the council proceedings, the bishops traveled around Cuba to relay, discuss, and discern the outlines of the conciliar discourse known among clergy, religious orders, and the laity.<sup>7</sup> Behind their participation in the sessions of Vatican II had been the Holy See's apostolic administrator in Cuba, Monsignor Cesare Zacchi, who had intermediated in the process of acquiring travel permits for Cuban bishops to participate in the most significant global event of the Catholic Church in their lifetime,<sup>8</sup> further signaling the distinct role of the Cuban Church in global Catholicism and the Holy See's vision to include Cuba in pivotal moments of the Church.

According to interviews, clergy and laity regularly convened to study and discuss the meaning of the council for Cuba while the council was still in session. As suggested by some, both the clergy and laity took pride in being able to follow the council despite the challenges in everyday life on the island. "Us Cubans, we want to be the first in everything," remarked a layman, portraying a sense of autonomous agency. "We are protagonists," he further emphasized.<sup>9</sup> While the Church seemed publicly condemned to silence in the margins of the revolutionary reality, and ridden with a radical decline in material resources, clerics and laypeople gathered in candlelight-lit churches and behind closed doors of private homes to study the latest teachings from Rome. Through leaflets produced locally and nationally, news on the evolving ideas and visions of the global Church arrived in rural parishes and dioceses all around the island. The global Church was present in the study groups and discussions, where Cuban Catholics were led to ask how the council would affect ecclesial life on the island, in the revolution.<sup>10</sup> A particularly striking example is the history of a layman who publicly returned to practicing religion in 1965, after a period of "observing from distance" while participating in the revolution. According to him, it was the news about Vatican II as a grand renewal, and the quick arrival of new ideas to the Cuban Church that made him interested in religion again.<sup>11</sup>

In 1962, the publication of the new Catholic periodical, *Vida Cristiana*, coincided with the council. As the only nation-wide Catholic publication approved by the Central Committee

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5 For instance, AHAH AC JN G. P. to Enrique Pérez Serantes 27.6.1962; AHAH AC JN Josefina Zaragoza to Teresa Olivera 10.9.1962; AHAH AC JN G. P. to Emilio Roca 26.9.1962; AHAH AC JD M G. P. to Antonio Bechily 26.9.1962.

6 J. Oscar Beozzo proposes that "all the bishops of Cuba would be able to take part in the Council." Apparently, Beozzo refers to the principal possibility of participation, as factually not every bishop did attend all of the conciliar sessions. In scholarship, the claim is countered by Uría 2011. Beozzo furthermore argues that the permission for Cuban bishops to travel to Rome was the result of Pope John XXIII's "cautious position in regard to Cuba" and his decision to not "yield to those who called for his [Fidel Castro] excommunication and the end of diplomatic relations" in the aftermath of the Agrarian Reform, the nationalization of foreign businesses, and the commercial blockade against Cuba as introduced by President Kennedy. See Beozzo 1995, 400.

7 Interview 6; Interview 23; Interview 24; Interview 29; Gómez Tréto 1988, 55; Uría 2011, 507.

8 Uría 2011, 550.

9 Interview 18.

10 Interview 18; Interview 23; Interview 24.

11 Interview 18.

of the Communist Party of Cuba (*Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba*), *Vida Cristiana* reported on the proceedings of the council irregularly, but continuously, focusing on short, descriptive news, while refraining from giving possibly politically sensitive commentaries since the periodical was pre-examined by the government prior to publishing.<sup>12</sup> The publishing profile of *Vida Cristiana* further testifies to the council being followed on the island. During the council, *Notas para Información del Clero* was also founded as a publication for distributing both information on and interpretations of the council proceedings during the sessions. Established in 1964 by the Episcopal Conference in Havana,<sup>13</sup> *Notas* was circulated to all dioceses when the council was still in session.<sup>14</sup> These sources of documental reception reveal that in Cuba, the council was assessed through the lens of national circumstances. Oral histories further testify that the crucial question posed on all teaching arriving from the council was, “how does this affect our live as a Church in Cuba?”<sup>15</sup>

It is noteworthy that the same question was asked in Rome: How did the case of Cuba

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12 VC Actualidad Católica 17.11.1963; VC Actualidad Católica 29.11.1963; VC Actualidad Católica 23.2.1964; VC Actualidad Católica 22.3.1964; VC 23.8.1964 Instrucción religiosa: El Concilio; VC 30.8.1964 Actualidad Católica; VC Actualidad Católica 25.10.1964; VC Actualidad Católica 1.11.1964; VC Actualidad Católica 15.11.1964; VC Siguiendo el Concilio 15.11.1964; VC 22.11.1964 Reflexiona... Siguiendo el Concilio; VC Reflexiona... Siguiendo el Concilio 29.11.1964; VC 6.12.1964 Actualidad Católica; VC 6.12.1964 Reflexiona... Siguiendo en Concilio; VC 13.6.1964 Reflexiona... Siguiendo el Concilio; VC 13.6.1964 Clausura de la tercera sesión del Concilio Vaticano II; VC 20.12.1964 Reflexiona... Siguiendo el Concilio; VC 27.12.1964 Reflexiona: Siguiendo el Concilio; VC 3.1.1965 Decreto del Concilio Vaticano sobre el Ecumenismo; VC 31.1.1965 Actualidad Católica; VC 27.7.1965 Enciclopedia “Concilium”; VC 25.7.1965 La Participación de los fieles; VC 1.8.1965 La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 8.8.1965 Reflexiona... La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 8.8.1965 Concilio Ecuménico Vaticano II: Cifras de la III sesión conciliar; VC 15.8.1965 Reflexiona... La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 22.8.1965 Reflexiona: La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 29.8.1965 Reflexiona... La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 5.9.1965 Reflexiona... La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 12.9.1965 Reflexiona... La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 19.9.1965 Reflexiona: La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 26.9.1965 Reflexiona... La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 3.10.1965 Ceremonia penitencial en cada templo por el Concilio; VC 3.10.1965 Reflexiona... La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 10.10.1965 Ceremonias de apertura del Concilio; VC 10.10.1965 Reflexiona: La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 17.10.1965 La Reforma Litúrgica: Encontrar el sentido de la liturgia más allá de los ritos; VC 24.10.1965 Cuarta sesión del Concilio Ecuménico Vaticano II; VC 24.10.1965 La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 31.10.1965 Observadores no católicos en el Concilio; VC 31.10.1965 Reflexiona... La Reforma Litúrgica; VC 7.11.1965 Siguiendo el Concilio; VC 14.11.1965 Siguiendo el Concilio; VC 14.11.1965 Siguiendo el Concilio: segunda semana; VC 21.11.1965 Siguiendo el Concilio: tercera semana; VC 28.11.1965 Carta del Papa al Concilio sobre el celibato eclesiástico; VC 28.11.1965 Siguiendo el Concilio: cuarta semana; VC 5.12.1965 Siguiendo el Concilio: quinta semana; VC 12.12.1965 Siguiendo el Concilio: sexta semana; séptima semana; VC 19.12.1965 Siguiendo el Concilio: octava semana; VC 26.12.1965 Siguiendo en Concilio; VC 2.1.1966 Octava sesión solemne del Concilio; VC 2.1.1965 Siguiendo el Concilio: decima semana; undécima semana; VC 9.1.1966 Ceremonia de clausura del Concilio; VC 9.1.1966 Siguiendo el Concilio: duodécima semana; VC 16.1.1966 Siguiendo el Concilio: última semana; Interview 10.

13 *Notas para Información del Clero* was a bulletin summarizing the discussions and decisions by Vatican II. It was produced by the Episcopal Conference in Havana and distributed to each diocese on the island, circumstances permitting. In 2015, the only comprehensive collection of the leaflets published between June and December 1964 remained in possession of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Cuba.

14 For instance, NOTAS Numero III, 25.7.1964: Que es teología pastoral?; NOTAS Numero IV, 14.8.1965: Iglesia en Camino; NOTAS Numero IV, 14.8.1965 Tareas del Sacerdote de Hoy; NOTAS Numero V, 31.8.1964: Continuación de Iglesia en Camino; NOTAS Numero VIII, 12.10.1964: La Fe del Sacerdote de Hoy por Karl Rahner; NOTAS Numero VIII, 12.10.1964: La Preparación del Clero para la Pastoral de las Vocaciones; NOTAS Numero X, 10.11.1964 Concepto que Hoy Tenemos de la Parroquia por Casiano Floristán; NOTAS Numero XI, 20.11.1964 Las Nuevas Formas de Incredulidad por Karl J. Hahn; NOTAS Numero XII, 30.11.1964: Colegialidad, Diócesis, Presbiterio por Karl Rahner; NOTAS Numero XIII, 14.12.1964: Adaptarse o renovarse? Por Jaime Lorés.

15 Interview 23; Interview 24.

affect the council and its teaching? Convened in 1959, the first working session of the council was opened on October 11, 1962—in less than a week, the Cuban Missile Crisis shook the sense of security of many in the world.<sup>16</sup> In response to the crisis, the Holy See engaged through the intermediation of Pope John XXIII with the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>17</sup> The impact of the crisis was felt in the council as well: Pope John XXIII's concerns for global tensions and the arms race were magnified, which was also portrayed in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, published five months later yet conceived in the thirteen days of terror in October as a direct response to the events in Cuba.<sup>18</sup> The encyclical, while condemning all worldviews negating the existence of God and seeking to repress human rights, contributed remarkably to the Holy See's diplomatic vision with its pastoral approach to dialogue between Catholics and communists in the modern world.<sup>19</sup>

Discourse on the council revealed the connections the Cuban Church struggled to maintain with the global Church in the tightening frameworks of the revolution. A painful experience of the Cuban Church was the marginalization from not only the revolutionary society, but from global Catholicism as well. Reminiscing about the foreign relations of the Church during the council, a cleric remarked: "Our relations were not few. They were nothing."<sup>20</sup> The Cuban hierarchy considered the scant relations between the Church on the island and other Latin American churches and organized religious groups to be particularly harmful for a systematic, in-depth reflection of conciliar theology under the direction of CELAM,<sup>21</sup> which initiated an institutional movement to implement the council in the region.<sup>22</sup> From this movement, the Cuban Church considered itself excluded by both CELAM itself and the restrictive policies of the revolutionary regime. Since traveling to and from Cuba was banned, foreign representatives of the Catholic hierarchy remained distant and unaware of the daily realities of the Cuban Church.<sup>23</sup> This resulted in certain bitterness towards CELAM and its leadership. The passivity of the organization was later confronted by the Cuban episcopal hierarchy, to no avail: according to the interviewees, the response of CELAM remained passive throughout the 1960s so as not to raise controversy with the Cuban government.<sup>24</sup>

Through Catholic Action, groups of laypeople maintained infrequent communication with Catholic communities in Europe and Latin America. Havana received ecclesial newspapers and periodicals from Madrid (*Ecclesia*), Mexico City, and Buenos Aires (*Criterio*)<sup>25</sup> "quite regularly."<sup>26</sup> When Pope John XXIII died in June 1963, the Cuban branch of

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16 For the Cuban missile crisis, see Hershberg 2010.

17 Alberigo 1995, 40; Fouilloux 1995, 56–57; Coppa 2008, 158, 166; O'Malley 2008, 99; Fejérdy 2016, 115.

18 Brady 2008, 93–94; Coppa 2008, 168–169.

19 *Pacem in Terris* 11.4.1963; Fejérdy 2016, 110, 117.

20 Las relaciones nuestras, no fueron pocas. Fueron ningunas. Interview 4.

21 CELAM, *Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*, Latin American Conference of Catholic Bishops, was founded in 1955 as a regional organization for discourse and dialogue among the Catholic Churches in Latin America.

22 Krier Mich 2004, 241.

23 Interview 4.

24 Interview 4.

25 In Latin America, the Argentinian periodical *Criterio* was among the most prestigious Catholic publications of the period. Alejos-Grau & Saranyana 2002, 241, 584.

26 AHAH AC JN Josefina Zaragoza to Cooperadores Diocesanas 19.2.1963; AHAH AC JN COC G. P. to A. Escribano 3.4.1963; AHAH AC JN Josefina Zaragoza to Dr. Manuel N.J. Bello 4/1963; AHAH AC JN Josefina Zaragoza to Don Santiago Corral 4/1963; AHAH AC JN Josefina Zaragoza to Pbro. Jorge Mejia 4/1963; AHAH AC JN Josefina Zaragoza to Lic. Carlos Augusto Garcinava V. 4/1963.

Catholic Action communicated with several representatives of the Holy See to express their condolences and received telegraphs from the Vatican in response.<sup>27</sup> This communication reflected quite well the geographical orientation of the Cuban Church: while it experienced disaffiliation from Latin American discourse, the global nature of the Catholic Church was present and influential on the island through the Holy See. In this regard, the distance experienced within the Church to Latin American Catholicism lends a further explanation to the strong role appointed to the Holy See's intermediation by the Cuban Church.

In 1962, after having already served as the *chargé d'affaires* for some time, Cesare Zacchi was appointed as the apostolic administrator of the Holy See to Cuba. As such, Zacchi's influence on the Cuban Church dated back to the era that established the course of the revolution and its unforeseen affects in ecclesial life. "The nuncio arrived, first and foremost, to maintain a balance, abiding the time because no one knew how the revolution was going to continue," recalled an interviewee.<sup>28</sup> Another contemporary of Zacchi described him as a diplomat with a strong vision of how the Cuban Church should face the challenges of the revolution.<sup>29</sup> Having served as a Holy See diplomat in Austria and Yugoslavia, Zacchi's career had provided him with both experience and vision on navigating Church–State relations in the context of European communism and the Holy See's *Ostpolitik*. As the interviewee remarked, "that's why they sent him, because he was a young person capable of having more ideas, and he already had experience of work in the Socialist Bloc." A similar conclusion has been presented in scholarly works on numerous occasions.<sup>30</sup> In Cuba, Zacchi's mission, and the Holy See's intervention, was a twofold project. While he was certainly expected to navigate and intermediate between the Cuban ecclesial hierarchy and the revolutionary government, he was also tasked to provide stimuli for the Cuban Church to further develop its internal dynamics and theological orientation.

Zacchi introduced a more global perspective to envisioning the Cuban case as both an ecclesial and socio-political paradigm. According to Zacchi, in order to understand the case of Cuba it was crucial to place it in the grand framework of the universal Church and its battle for meaning in the era of rapid changes in the 1960s. A priest recalled Zacchi's words shortly after his arrival to Havana, explaining to the Cuban clergy how the contemporary Cuban Church–State relations echoed the changing role of the Catholic Church in modern times.<sup>31</sup> Zacchi found in the Cuban revolution and its resulting Church–State clash an echo of a deeper, more complex issue for the future of the Church. According to him, what the Church experienced in Cuba would be repeated in other contexts throughout the world as an inevitable result of the binaries created by modernity.<sup>32</sup>

According to Zacchi, what was happening in Cuba would ensue on every continent and

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27 AHAH AC JN Card. Aloisi Masella to Acción Feminina, Acción Católica Cubana 8.6.1963; AHAH AC JN Cardinal Cicognani to Acción Católica Cubana 6/1963.

28 El nuncio vino, más que nada, a tratar de mantener un equilibrio, esperando un tiempo, porque nadie sabía cómo iba a seguir la revolución. Interview 11.

29 Interview 4.

30 Por eso lo mandaron, porque era una persona joven que podía tener más ideas, y ya tenía más experiencia del trabajo en el campo socialista. Interview 4. Kirk 1989, 118; Uría 2011, 509.

31 Interview 1; Interview 4; Interview 9; Interview 24.

32 Lo que sucedió en Cuba fue, según Monseñor Zacchi, una cuestión de la Iglesia en frente del modernismo. Interview 4.

in all political, economic, and social contexts: ultimately, the case of Cuba was a sign of the times that tested the Catholic Church's ability to either assimilate with or disengage from modernity and the increasing pluralism of cultures and ideologies whose emergence coincided with the case of Cuba. In this perspective, Cuba was the perfect exemplary case of the epoch; although unique in its context, it was also universal in its grand themes and narratives of continuity and change, tradition and renewal, the old facing the radically new. In this manner, Cuban Church–State relations also set a precedent for the Holy See and global Catholicism in creating diplomacy and policies of dialogue and cooperation with communist regimes.

With this vision, Zacchi's arrival also cast light on the contesting interpretations of the revolution that existed within the Church. Whereas the Spanish bishops analyzed the events in Cuba in the light of national and personal experiences from their homeland, the Cuban clergy saw the issue as an inherently Cuban matter. Hence, Zacchi's take on the Cuban case illustrates equally the shortsightedness of the Cuban Church regarding its own recent past as well as the more global vision of the Holy See in contextualizing Cuba within the larger Catholic world. Historian John M. Kirk has come to similar conclusions, writing that "the complaints about the nuncio remitted to the Holy See by disgruntled church people testify not only to Zacchi's dedication to his mission but also the shortcomings of many of Cuba's Catholics at that time."<sup>33</sup>

Among Zacchi's fortes in diplomacy was his fluent communication with and working relationship with Fidel Castro.<sup>34</sup> As the revolution was personified by Fidel Castro, and Zacchi's primary aim was to avoid confrontation with the revolution, a predominant focus of his diplomatic vision was to establish fluent communication with Castro.<sup>35</sup> From this diplomatic vision emerged his intentional work for consolidating direct contact with Fidel Castro and other representatives of the revolutionary vanguard: association with the leadership of the revolution but also diplomacy through personal relations and intimate, one-to-one connections. Within the Cuban Church, Zacchi was seen as the Holy See's representative in direct communication with the Cuban government, which the Cuban bishops, for their part, had very little dialogue with.

Coinciding with Zacchi's work, the revolutionary government imposed new institutional authority on the Church: in March 1962, *Oficina para Atención a Asuntos Religiosos* was established, according to MINREX, in order for Church–State relations to "find a solution to possible difficulties between the parties and to promote harmony between both of them."<sup>36</sup> In order for the Cuban Church to establish working relations with the State, Zacchi's ultimate vision of diplomacy was to empower the Cuban ecclesial authorities to assume autonomy over their relations and communication with the government.<sup>37</sup> One oral history account notes that his method of work was based "on conversation, more than anything; not only the nunciature, but to have the bishops discussing with the government, he was a mediator."<sup>38</sup> During his time in Cuba, Zacchi became well-known as a hands-on diplomat invested in the day-to-day life and realities. He was a Holy See diplomat with a pragmatic approach: his focus was not only on

33 Kirk 1989, 117.

34 ACMINREX SS Amado Palenque to Raúl Roa 2.10.1964.

35 Interview 4.

36 Viabilizar la solución de eventuales dificultades entre las partes, y de promover la armonía entre ambas - - . ACMINREX SS Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores to Mons. César Zacchi 4.7.1963.

37 Interview 11.

38 Más que nada fue conversando, no solamente la nunciatura pero haciendo que los obispos hablaron con el gobierno, era un mediator. Interview 11.

advocacy, but also on improving the grassroots conditions under which the Church could operate.

Some interviewees argued vividly that the nuncio had more personal influence on the delicate Church–State balance and in maintaining the status quo than any other member of the ecclesial hierarchy on the island. During the times when dialogue between the local church authorities and the regime came completely to a halt, Zacchi maintained communication with both and served as a mediator.<sup>39</sup> Zacchi’s experience in Cuba also informed what has later been discussed within the frameworks of *Ostpolitik*: the dynamics of global and local Catholic authority in sustaining relations with a Communist regime. As has been suggested by Fejérdy, among others, the Holy See learned the importance of bilateral communication between representatives of the Holy See and the local regime, reducing the role of local bishops due to their challenging intermediary position.<sup>40</sup>

Zacchi was fully employed with his tasks in Cuba, and the staff of the nunciature was prepared to take action with short notice when conflicts arose. A telling example of the situation is a story representative of the numerous incidents that occurred on the island as clashes between local revolutionaries and Catholics, as relayed in an interview. The interviewee, a person affiliated with the work of the nunciature, happened to be travelling in rural Cuba, and when witnessing a peculiar incident, decided to call Zacchi in Havana and ask for clarification about what was happening:

They were preparing to take the priests from [the town] to Cavadonga, like a coup d’état that the government wanted to execute. Almost all of the priests were Spanish, not all—there were Cubans as well. - - They told me, “They have the priests at the airport, they’re taking them to Havana to board the vessel.” So, I called *monseñor* and told him what was happening because no one knew anything. In Havana, they didn’t know.<sup>41</sup>

For the layperson, the episode at the airport in Camagüey was quickly resolved via direct orders from Zacchi:

*Monseñor* told me, “Stay there right now—go, join the people, don’t let them evacuate any church; populate them, all of you go, stay in the churches even though some of them wouldn’t have any priests; start to say the rosary, whatever, but do not allow any church to be left empty.”

So, that was my task in that moment. It was very hard because people were scared. And in Havana, they didn’t know. It was a surprise hit. - -

The idea was to close the church. They couldn’t close it because, even if there were ten people, I strived for them to stay in the church and say the rosary or do anything through the night. - - They didn’t succeed in what they wanted.<sup>42</sup>

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39 Interview 11.

40 Fejérdy 2016, 121.

41 Estaban preparando sacar los sacerdotes de [la ciudad] a Cavadonga, fue una cosa como un golpe de estado que quisiera dar el Gobierno. Casi todos los sacerdotes eran españoles, no todos, había cubanos también. - - Me dicen, “tienen todos los sacerdotes en el aeropuerto, se los llevan para La Habana a coger el barco.” Entonces, claro que llamaba al monseñor y le dije qué estaba pasando porque nadie sabía nada. En La Habana no sabían. Interview 11.

42 Monseñor me dijo: “Quédate ahora mismo – vete con la gente, reúnete, que no dejes ninguna iglesia vacía; llenan, vayan todos, queden en las iglesias, aunque en otras no haya sacerdotes; empezaren a rezar el rosario, lo que sea, pero no permites que se queda una iglesia vacía.” Entonces, esta fue mi labor en ese momento. Fue muy difícil porque la gente estaba muy asustada. Y en La Habana no sabían. Fue un golpe de sorpresa. - - La idea era

In his conversations with Brazilian Dominican father Frei Betto, published as a monograph in 1985, Fidel Castro recalled the early years of the revolution as an unstable time for the Church in Cuba. Although the retrospective accounts provided in the conversations of Fidel Castro and Frei Betto must be critically analyzed, while bearing in mind the roles of memory and interpretation, oral histories and written testimonies, and their politicized nature in the revolution, the commentaries by Castro serve as an authoritative reference point for the use and reinterpretation of the most crucial episodes in Cuban Church–State relations. While admitting to conflicts and tension in Church–State relations, Castro claimed that “no churches in Cuba were ever closed down—none of them,” and that no institutional measures were taken against the Church.<sup>43</sup>

Yet firsthand accounts by contemporaries, such as the events described above, discussed repeated occasions of locally erupting confrontations.<sup>44</sup> The incidents witnessed by the laity in several dioceses draw a sharp contrast to the intentions behind Castro’s claim. For instance, a similar occasion was witnessed in Havana, where Zacchi intervened in the occupation of a convent administered by a religious order for women in Old Havana, not allowing the premises to be fully nationalized by the State: through his intervention, half of the building resumed its function as a convent.<sup>45</sup> Despite their evident frequency, occupations of church properties as well as imprisonment and deportation of the clergy and members of religious orders from Cuba remain undisclosed histories of the revolution. Little archival evidence is available, and a certain barrier of refraining from open remembrance of the historic episodes by firsthand accounts remains in place.

Oral history provides, at times, the best and only source of historical information on experiences relating to life in the revolution, but the recollections must be analyzed with an awareness of the subjective and interpretative nature of memory and the public, politicized frames of remembrance and reminiscence in Cuba. Yet precisely because of the level of political sensitivity regarding these topics, any understanding on the nature of the events within the Church and in the grand narrative of the revolution do not coincide. For example, these events were described as “initial difficulties” that were overcome relatively quickly “without any trauma” by Fidel Castro in 1985. According to Castro, what ensued from these experiences was “a situation of not exactly marginalization but of coexistence between the Revolution and the Church.”<sup>46</sup>

In this context of contrasting experiences, the nunciature represented diplomatic intermediation working through concrete interventions, often as an immediate response to conflicts occurring between the Church and the revolution. Among the most arduous tasks were the cases of resolving tensions between Catholics—either clergy or laity—and militant revolutionaries. “In all of the problems that the nunciature dealt with, there was also the problem of clergy,”<sup>47</sup>

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cerrar la iglesia. No la pudieron cerrar porque, aunque fueron diez personas, yo traté que estuvieran en la iglesia rezando un rosario o haciendo algo toda la noche. - - No lograron lo que querían. Interview 11.

43 Fidel y la religión 1985, 225.

44 For instance, Interview 1; Interview 4; Interview 11; Interview 29.

45 Interview 4.

46 Fidel y la religión 1985, 278.

47 Dentro de todos los problemas que tenía la nunciatura, también tenía este problema de sacerdotes. Interview 11.

remarked a collaborator of Zacchi's. The nuncio played a pivotal role in maintaining communication with Cuban seminarians and recently ordained priests who resided in Europe during the conflict in Cuba. Some priests approached the nunciature with issues related to traveling to and from the island; at times, the nunciature was communicating on behalf of the priests to the outside world; sometimes also the priests were involved in counterrevolutionary plans or acts. The nunciature responded to these issues with intervention and mediation:

It was a very difficult situation because, among other things, I remember that some people, priests, were in trouble with the government. They had encountered them—they said there was one priest that was encountered with young men and guns in a church, and they imprisoned him, and the nunciature intervened.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the interviews done for this research project, numerous pieces of scholarly work account to Zacchi's pivotal role in Church–State relations during the post-Bay of Pigs era.<sup>49</sup> Remarkably, similar interpretations were also recounted by Fidel Castro in his retrospective commentaries on the nuncio and the work of the nunciature. Among the histories that are in contradiction with each other with respect to Fidel's words and the narratives of the Church, one shared narrative seems to be the importance of Zacchi for maintaining a balance in Church–State relations. Castro appreciated Zacchi as a sensible diplomat capable of communication and establishing working relations.<sup>50</sup> In retrospect, Castro described Zacchi as “a very intelligent, very capable man, a person with a lot of constructive ability,” who “made an important contribution to keeping these conflicts from becoming more serious.”<sup>51</sup>

Apart from and because of Zacchi's high esteem by the Cuban government, recognized by the episcopate as a valuable asset for the local church, although not approved of by all bishops, his diplomatic vision was also a source of inter-ecclesial debate and dismay.<sup>52</sup> Following the death of Cardinal Arteaga in 1963, according to historian Ignacio Uría, the government prohibited the Church from publicly commemorating the prelate. Behind the silent funeral was the negotiation between the Cuban government and Zacchi, approved by the Episcopal Conference: four imprisoned priests were liberated in exchange for the non-public funeral proceedings. This led to sermons of protest by some in the episcopal hierarchy, and it resulted in both further tension in the life of the clergy in social sphere and controversies over both Zacchi's and the Holy See's diplomacy.<sup>53</sup> Zacchi's stance within the Cuban Church reflected well the role of the Vatican diplomatic service, according to church historian Peter Hebblethwaite: to act as a mediator and a buffer between local Catholic bishops and the regime. As such, diplomacy may have protected local ecclesial authorities but also resulted in support for the regime in the name of diplomatic consideration, despite the local bishops' opposition. At times, such diplomacy has also been taken as a system of control and imposed authority by the Holy See over local churches.<sup>54</sup>

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48 Era una situación muy difícil porque, entre otras cosas, me acuerdo de unas personas, sacerdotes, que tenían problemas con el Gobierno. Que habían encontrado - - había uno que decían que habían encontrado muchachos con armas con él en la iglesia, y le aprisionaron, y se metió la nunciatura. Interview 11.

49 See Kirk 1985, 101; Kirk 1989, 117–121.

50 Interview 11; Fidel y la religión 1985, 224.

51 Fidel y la religión 1985, 224–225.

52 Interview 11; Uría 2011, 549.

53 Uría 2011, 516, 551.

54 Hebblethwaite 1986, 74.



A contested dimension of Zacchi's vision, and of the Holy See's influence on Cuba, was the reinforcement of conciliar theology on the island, particularly as a method for integration. Zacchi's approach to diplomacy reflected conciliar visions of the Church: pastoral theology and ecclesiology emphasized inclusion and openness in social participation. From this perspective, among Zacchi's most significant achievements was the introduction of the Vatican II theology as a key to improving Church–State relations in Cuba. By his attempts to engage the Cuban Church in reflecting on conciliar theology, Zacchi aimed to encourage the Church to renew its stance on civic participation and engagement in the revolutionary society in a more inclusive manner. As the nuncio's arrival coincided with the Vatican II and the effects of its renewal efforts, Zacchi opened the discourse on what the council could mean for the Church in Cuba.<sup>55</sup> As a representative of the Holy See, he was tasked to encourage the local church to embrace the council and its teaching. In this manner, theological education was also a channel for the Holy See to direct the life of the Cuban Church in a concrete, progressive manner.

In a conciliar spirit, Zacchi encouraged, even urged, Cuban Catholics to recognize the revolutionary government as their regime and to assimilate into revolutionary society.<sup>56</sup> In order to support integration into the revolutionary reality, he maintained frequent communications with not only the episcopate and clergy, but with the laity as well: the president of Catholic Action's national committee, lawyer Raúl Gómez Treto, was among his supporters.<sup>57</sup> In the mid-1960s, when the loyalty of identity and participation was a defining matter for both revolutionaries and Catholics alike, the negotiation of parallel identities generated controversy particularly among older generations of Catholics. For the younger generations, seminarians, and active members of more progressive Catholic youth organizations, it was an opening that garnered their interest and sympathy. This of course caused tension between different generations of clergy, clergy and bishops, as well as clergy and laity. It was imposing a progressive vision of conciliar ecclesiology and pastoral theology on the Cuban Church at a time when the majority of the clergy was still struggling to come to terms with the tragic experiences of the preceding years and the unexpected new reality of the revolution.

Zacchi's vision of diplomacy faced criticism from within the ecclesial ranks. For some of the clergy, and occasionally the bishops as well, his manners seemed too obsequious with respect to the government and the aims of the revolution. In the eyes of the more traditionalist clergy, Zacchi was theologically too progressive, projecting ideas of Vatican II on Cuba even mid-council and without the conciliar teachings having yet been comprehensively studied within the Church on the island,<sup>58</sup> even though a large number of clergy and laity were already exploring conciliar theology on their own. Further challenging Zacchi's position was the fact

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55 It is noteworthy that scholars, such as Fouilloux, have proposed that in the preparation of Vatican II from 1959 onward, the Holy See's diplomatic representation in Cuba had not been consulted or included the vota process. According to Fouilloux, "such prudence was understandable in the difficult case of Cuba," apparently referring to the tense political situation and the Church–State relations in the emerging conflict between the episcopate and the Cuban government. See Fouilloux 1995, 105.

56 Kirk 1989, 119.

57 AHAH AC JN Mons. Cesare Zacchi to G. P. 5.1.1963; AHAH AC JN G. P. to Cesar Zacchi 11.10.1963; AHAH AC JN Cesar Zacchi to G. P. 18.10.1963.

58 Interview 11.

that he was not appointed a bishop until 1967,<sup>59</sup> signaling a magisterial recognition of his diplomatic work.<sup>60</sup> Confronting Zacchi's vision were those Cuban priests, some of them of Spanish nationality, with Pérez Serantes at the frontline, whose more fierce, less reconciliatory efforts made visible the internal tensions of the Cuban Church.<sup>61</sup> As Ignacio Uría's study shows, Pérez Serantes also repeatedly established direct, personal communication with representatives of the Cuban government, such as Raúl Castro and Celia Sánchez, attempting to independently negotiate more space for the Church in Santiago de Cuba.<sup>62</sup>

Zacchi's dynamic presence portrayed the global dimension of Catholicism from a Cuban perspective. Through him, the Holy See was present on the island and in constant dialogue with the Cuban government, as was the diplomatic vision of Pope John XXIII.<sup>63</sup> On certain occasions, the presence was rather concrete: for example, in 1963 Zacchi was able to direct emergency funds from Pope Paul VI to Cuba to help with recovery efforts after a hurricane had hit parts of the island.<sup>64</sup> Despite occasional tension between the Holy See and Cuban government, the two maintained diplomatic relations throughout the revolutionary period. This provided the local church in Cuba with valuable global prestige: through diplomatic exchange, the Cuban government remained conscious of global support for the local church, and Cuban Catholics sustained a sense of transnational belonging.

In 1963, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) responded to the Holy See's inquiry on the state of affairs on the island by asserting there had been an improvement in Church–State relations, signaling an attempt to rebuild the severed Church–State relations after the radicalization of the revolution. As the MINREX correspondence to the nunciature shows, during this period the Holy See was carefully monitoring the situation in Cuba, with frequent checks on governmental policies and reaffirmations of a diplomatic presence on the island. Among the most urgent topics was the replacement of clergy in Cuba after the expulsions of 1961. Finally in 1963, MINREX responded to the Holy See's proposition of sending foreign clergy to Cuba with conditional approval: the Cuban government insisted that it be allowed to select the countries of origin of the arriving clergy, and it reserved the right to expell them without negotiation in case of confrontation. The government also expressed that it would rely on the nunciature to instruct any incoming clergy to assimilate with the Cuban circumstances. Yet, their term of service in Cuba could be ended by a unilateral decision by the government, even though in Cuba clergy and religious were guaranteed “absolute respect in the exercise of their activities,

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59 ACMINREX SS Carlos Neira García / Dirección de América y Europa Occ. to Luis Amado Blanco 4.1.1967. The internal correspondence of MINREX discusses the ordination of Zacchi as the titular Archbishop of Zella, Tunis, in 1967. His ordination was celebrated in Havana by Archbishop Clarizio, the apostolic delegate in Canada. After the liturgy, Fidel Castro and numerous officials of the Cuban government attended the reception in honor of Zacchi at the nunciature. MINREX documentation shows that the visit of Castro was prolonged to several hours as he engaged in conversations with Cuban bishops, members of diplomatic corps, and other representatives of the Cuban Church. The report notes the satisfaction of Zacchi for the “cordial climate” in the encounters. The meeting of Castro and the Cuban bishops at the reception was later described by Gómez Treto as the first opportunity to “converse frankly and cordially” since 1959. See Gómez Treto 1988, 85.

60 Gómez Treto 1988, 84–85.

61 Interview 4.

62 Uría 2011, 527–530.

63 Coppa 2008, 157–159.

64 Uría 2011, 519.

as it has been so far as well.” In addition, the government assured the Holy See that a priority of the State was “to guarantee the free development of a religious cult.”<sup>65</sup>

The same year, MINREX informed the Holy See that the Cuban Church was allowed to remain in possession of its buildings and premises via rental agreements with the State: according to the government, only those left unattended had been transferred to the State and put to state-controlled use.<sup>66</sup> As such, the claim by MINREX contradicted the recollections about the occupations of churches and confiscations of church property, with church premises becoming militarized zones, taken into State possession via forced expulsions of clergy and religious. The Holy See seems to have reached a similar conclusion: it accused the Cuban government of being reluctant to cooperate, particularly in the matter of releasing the last four of the seven arrested priests still in prison for charges of counterrevolutionary activities.<sup>67</sup>

In further contestation with the Holy See, the Cuban government declined the Holy See’s petition to facilitate the purchase of cars for bishops, blaming the U.S. trade embargo for their decision; however, it granted the Church permission to acquire vehicles from abroad using its own funds.<sup>68</sup> In a letter to the nuncio, the revolutionary government assured the Holy See of its will to “guarantee to the Catholic Church the free and public practice of worship.” Yet, the reassurance also stated that the government “reserves the right to examine—with the help of the apostolic nunciature—every point of controversy that may emerge, with the desire to reach a mutual, satisfactory agreement.”<sup>69</sup> The exchange shows the way in which the Cuban Church was, at times, excluded from the diplomatic process as a means of protecting the daily conditions of Catholic life and pastoral work on the island. With the intermediation of Zacchi, the Holy See and the Cuban government sustained reciprocal relations and dialogue; for Cuban Catholics, particularly the episcopate, this provided them with the experience of being both acknowledged and ignored in the global contexts of Catholicism and the Cold War.

## 2. The Struggling Church

After the radicalization period in the revolutionary process, the latter half of the 1960s saw the consolidation of Marxist ideology and the revolutionary framework in public and social life. As discussed by Guerra, for instance, the punitive power of the State became dispersed throughout the social system, employing citizens as deputies of the State by the mid-1960s.<sup>70</sup> This further turned the revolution inwards: people became both the personification and mirror of the revolution.

In this environment, and with the dramatically declining resources for ecclesial work, laypeople assumed significant responsibility over sustaining the daily life of Catholic communities. In the community of *San Judas y San Nicolas* in Havana, the development was addressed by a reformation of lay structures. According to the laity of the community, “the existence of only one priest in the community obligates the laity to take charge of progress in

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65 ACMINREX SS Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores to Mons. César Zacchi.

66 ACMINREX SS Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores to Mons. César Zacchi.

67 ACMINREX SS Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores to Mons. César Zacchi.

68 ACMINREX SS Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores to Mons. César Zacchi.

69 ACMINREX SS Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores to Mons. César Zacchi.

70 Guerra 2012, 23.

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the community.”<sup>71</sup> Simultaneously, Catholic Action also conducted surveys on the conditions of parishes in both urban and rural settings, charting the mindset and attitudes of Cubans towards the activities and teachings of the Church.<sup>72</sup>

Vast amounts of archival sources reveal that within Catholic communities, Christmas and Easter were celebrated in open acclamation: by services, by the exchange of institutional greetings, and by collective celebrations in grassroots communities. Catholics prepared themselves for the celebrations intentionally, through public campaigns and lectures, retreats, meditation, prayer, and intensified liturgical preparations. The national Christmas campaign of Catholic Action in 1962 promoted Christian celebration of the nativity. The campaign was described to nuncio Zacchi by its lay organizers as “a wonderful festival, thanks be to God,”<sup>73</sup> by which “with pure Christian joy, believers participated in worship in the Christmas season.”<sup>74</sup> At the same time, Catholics celebrating Easter and Christmas were met with insults and threats from their neighbors, colleagues, and family members integrated into the revolution.<sup>75</sup> Christian celebrations, such as Christmas and Epiphany, were also appropriated by the revolutionary media and placed in service of the revolution’s ideology and ethos.<sup>76</sup>

In 1963, the national committee of Catholic Action produced liturgical materials for the Lenten season, Easter, Advent, and Christmas, which had already been removed from the national calendar.<sup>77</sup> In general, the number of printed materials ranged from 50,000 to 135,000 copies.<sup>78</sup> In 1963, a new detail was introduced to the celebration as families were instructed to craft an Advent calendar consisting of a wreath and candles to be used at home in preparation for Christmas,<sup>79</sup> suggesting that in the domestic sphere, Christmas was celebrated by Catholic families without interruptions. As an intermediary expression of the private moving into the public, annually on September 8 the traditional festivities of *Virgen de La Caridad del Cobre*, with the national *patrona*’s original effigy and its many replicated representations, were celebrated in local communities of all sizes and locations.<sup>80</sup> Yet, since Pasqual processions could not be conducted publicly on the streets, *Via Crucis* was approached as meditative contemplation.<sup>81</sup>

In defense of the Christian family, *Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre* was harnessed as a unifying symbol of maternity and familial belonging. In 1963, the theme of the patron saint’s festivities on September 8 was the advocacy of the Virgin in families: families engaged in the ecclesial communities, and especially families unaffiliated with the Church were called to participate by prayer, liturgy, and devotion in order to bring them “under the protection of the

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71 AHAH AC JN Parroquia San Judas y San Nicolas.

72 AHAH AC JN Letter to Antonio Martínez 14.8.1963.

73 AHAH AC JN AC JN G. P. to Mons. César Zacchi 16.1.1963.

74 AHAH AC JN Tesorería 16.1.1963.

75 Interview 18.

76 Casavantes Bradford 2014, 77–78, 81–82.

77 AHAH AC JN Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana to Cooperadoras diocesanas 16.1.1963; AHAH AC JN G. P. to Excmte. y Rvdme. Mons. Alfredo Muller San Martín 9.4.1963.

78 AHAH AH JN G. P. to Juan Fernández Burges 30.10.1963a; AHAH AC JN G. P. to Juan Fernández Burges 30.10.1963b.

79 AHAH AC JN Consejo Nacional, Juventud Femenina de Acción Católica to G. P.; AHAH AC JN Campaña de Navidad 1963.

80 AHAH AC JN G. P. to Roger DeMontigny 9.8.1963.

81 AHAH AC JD La Habana Raúl Gómez Treto to M.A. Loreda 23.2.1965.

Virgin.”<sup>82</sup> Also, study materials promoting Christian matrimony were distributed nationally<sup>83</sup> as part of a campaign for reinforcing the idea of Catholic family organized by the diocesan committee in Havana.<sup>84</sup> Lay groups also campaigned nation-wide to introduce local priests to their communities, increasing the clergy’s visibility and helping bridge the gap between the clergy and unaffiliated laity. With leaflets, notice boards, and Masses to which the whole *barrio* was invited, priests were introduced to the people as “the one who prays for every believer,” “the one who consoles us and approaches God in great affliction,” and “the one who sanctifies our families.”<sup>85</sup> This discourse reveals a remarkable shift of dynamics: laypeople attempting to increase the clergy’s visibility and approval among the people.

On the level of religion as it was experienced and practiced in local communities, these examples challenge the top-down version of Cuban history in which the Church is an object of the revolution without autonomous agency. These details from each providence suggest, instead, that very similar patterns of agency and activity occurred within the Church. Most interestingly, these examples draw significant attention to the role of the laity and the agency of laypeople, expanding the preceding paradigm of treating the Church in Cuba synonymously with the institutional church, the offices of the Catholic Church on the island. In scholarly work on Cuban Catholicism in the revolution, the role assumed by the laity calls for a broader recognition of the concept “Church,” one ranging from institution to individuals and doctrine to practices and experiences of everyday life. Expanding the concept of the “Church” beyond the episcopal hierarchy and ordained clergy allows for a more nuanced, multifaceted understanding of the two-way process in which the Church in Cuba struggled to make sense of the revolution: the top-down process of the institutional church with its doctrine and tradition, and the bottom-up process of the laity at the grassroots level responding to the challenge of balancing their daily identities and lives at the intersection of life as Catholics, Cubans, and citizens of the revolutionary nation.

Despite the frantic campaigning by the militant laity, and their reinforced experience of agency, by 1964 the Church had lost the majority of its human and economic resources,<sup>86</sup> its visible domains and activities in civil society, and a great number of the flock that used to enter the churches for worship. An atmosphere of fear had seized the Catholic communities at the grassroots level, causing the majority of the formerly practicing laypeople to distance themselves from the Church either by choice or necessity. Some of the laity were captured by the new ideology and genuinely assumed the belief system and grand narratives provided by the revolution. Others were intimidated by the polarization and saw it better to distance themselves from actors considered counterrevolutionary and antipatriotic. Some continued to

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82 Bajo la protección de la Virgen. AHAH AC JN Festividad de Ntra. Sra. de la Caridad por Junta Nacional de A.C.C.

83 AHAH AC JN Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana to Cooperadoras diocesanas 16.1.1963; AHAH AC JN G. P. to Excmo. y Rvdme. Mons. Alfredo Muller San Martín 9.4.1963.

84 AHAH AC JN Calendario 1963; AHAH AC JN Guion para dos charlas: Responsabilidades de los padres de familia.

85 Quien ruega por todos los fieles --, quien consuela y acerca a Dios en las grandes tribulaciones - - , quien santifica nuestras familias - -. AHAH AC JN Día del Parroco 6/1963.

86 For instance, in 1964, laypeople were encouraged to donate regularly to their local communities in order to maintain the daily functions on congregational level. AHAH AC JN Formación de conciencia sobre el deber de los fieles en el sostenimiento económico de la Iglesia. Plan de la Junta Nacional de Acción Católica, diciembre 1964.

support the Church and confess its faith but opted for the individual practicing of religion, invisible in the revolutionary public space and the performance of the revolution.

A small minority remained, claiming Catholicism as a visible identity and expressing it in the marginal space they were given within the frameworks of the revolution. All of this painfully served as a reminder that the Catholic identity of Cubans had not proven as steadfast as the ecclesial hierarchy had anticipated. That perhaps suggests why, for Cuban Catholics, it was a readily accepted privilege to belong to the Mystical Body of the Christ; membership in the universal church created a sense of global safety and cohesion among national churches, and the Holy See's presence served to navigate ecclesial diplomacy in Cuba. A testimony included in an official piece of correspondence with a Mexican Catholic publication emphasized the commitment of Cuban Catholics to the global church—both in and off this world: “So, in our souls this wonderful feeling of fraternity has grown a lot in these recent times. We feel united, committed, and accompanied by all those who constitute the Mystical Body of which Christ is the head, and we and you its members.”<sup>87</sup>

Yet on the island, in the narrow frameworks of national identity anchored to the revolution, belonging to Christ's body was also seen as a responsibility, almost a martyr-like sacrifice, one that lay Catholics readily reminded their peers of. When other domains of life threatened to override religious activities, or the fear of public opinion impeded laypeople from visibly engaging in their communities, lay leaders were blunt in reminding them about the responsibility of Cuban Catholics to build their communities: “Remember that we are the Mystical Body, that we need one another—in order to maintain our vitality, not as isolated units with independent functions,” wrote one member of a lay association to another.<sup>88</sup> In the revolution, the Mystical Body's Cuban members portrayed unity not only by thought, but also by public participation. For many in the laity, the requirement was too demanding.

Whereas in international correspondence Catholic Action's members emphasized global belonging and community, in Cuba the correspondence discussed with more ambiguity the tightening frames of life for the Church. Institutional, official correspondence aside, on the island dioceses and Catholic militants discussed these matters not from a distance but within close acquaintance.<sup>89</sup> In letters from Havana to Santiago de Cuba, militant lay Catholics called Archbishop Pérez Serantes “*abuelo Enrique*” because he intervened in the power struggles between the priests and lay militants of his diocese for the benefit of the laity.<sup>90</sup> Correspondence such as this shows layers of shared experiences as traces of intimacy were inscribed in salutations and small remarks of warmth and friendship, in letters by and to both bishops and clergy as well as laity.

Through thousands of pages of correspondence, both within Havana's circle of militant Catholics and from Havana to Santiago de Cuba, Matanzas, Pinar del Río, Cienfuegos, and Camagüey, the letters reveal a sense of comradery: coming together in the face of a threat. In

87 Pues en nuestras almas ese hermoso sentimiento de la fraternidad ha crecido mucho en estos últimos tiempos. Nos sentimos unidos, auxiliados y acompañados por todos los que constituyen ese Cuerpo Místico del que Cristo es la Cabeza y nosotros y ustedes sus miembros. AHAH AC JN Josefina Zaragoza to Sofia del Valle 13.7.1963.

88 Acuérdate que somos Cuerpo Místico, que necesitamos los unos de los otros – para mantener nuestra vitalidad, no células aisladas con funcionamiento independiente. AHAH AC JN Letter to Antonio Martínez 14.8.1963.

89 For instance, AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Pedro Meurice 13.6.1967.

90 *Abuelo*, eng. grandfather. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 21.9.1965.

this writing, the dire realities of life for the Church became visible. Hierarchical distances dissolved as lay leaders confided in their bishops with a tone of worry about the future of the Church on the island. In small remarks, individuals discussed what they were witnessing on a daily basis: diminishing participation and commitment, an atmosphere of fear and physical threats, declining economic resources, and faltering faith in the face of hardship.<sup>91</sup>

At the same time, the letters reflect both a quest for camaraderie and a struggle to maintain unity at a time of disruption. The Church in Cuba struggled to show the world it was surviving while also experiencing a deep disconnection from global Catholicism and a lack of interest of Catholics from other realities in knowing about and supporting the Cuban Church in its struggle. The experience was made all the more dystopian by the ongoing council, which provided Cuba simultaneously with realistic tools of self-reflection and utopian visions of an ideal church that hardly corresponded to the realities of ecclesial life in the revolutionary reality. The grand lines of the council—openness to the world, dialogue within differences, the bold presence of the Church as a sign of hope for the world—seemed to underscore the plight of the Cuban Church: the paralyzing fear experienced by individuals and communities, confrontations, and reduced resources for daily work. As the Church in Cuba increasingly struggled to maintain hope, it became more difficult for the Church to serve as a beacon of light for the people.

In the everyday reality, the Church was struggling against the overwhelming support of Cubans for the revolution. “It was a difficult time,” recalled a laywoman who had participated in the revision of lay agency in a town in central Cuba:

Not only because of the situation of the church, but also because ... Look, churches were always in the middle of the neighborhoods, like next to the park where people spent time. There were always people watching, knowing who participated in what, and who was a militant in the Church.<sup>92</sup>

In her study, Schmidt recounts the experiences of devotees of *La Virgen de La Caridad* and their fear of visiting the national shrine, with informants keeping track of visitors to churches.<sup>93</sup> These experiences reveal the impossible imperative of living a double life faced by the laity: to participate in the life of the Church as active, committed lay Catholics, while also facing the realities of suspicion, monitoring, and public rejection, which often varied from towns to villages, often depending on the attitudes of local State authorities. Catholic communities faced very different realities of everyday life depending on their location on the island.

While the reinforcement of lay agency began and was received in the cities of Havana and Santiago de Cuba with a sense of urgency and necessity, other areas were struggling with a lack of both human and material resources, which had become an obstacle for maintaining regular functions. A comparison of the dioceses of Havana and Santiago de Cuba to the diocese of Pinar del Río is particularly striking. In 1965, the sites seemed to correspond to different realities: whereas Havana was already taking its first steps at redefining lay participation, the rural diocese of Pinar del Río was coming to terms with having almost no lay participation at

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91 For instance, AHAH AC JN G. P. to Nidia García 3.4.1963; Interview 4; Interview 14; Interview 15.

92 No sólo por lo que estaba pasando en la vida de la Iglesia sino... Mira, siempre se encuentra una iglesia en el centro, en los barrios, en los parques donde estaba la gente... Siempre hubo gente allá cerca, vigilando, si sabían quién estaba participando, quién era un militante en la Iglesia. Interview 19.

93 Schmidt 2015, 228–229.

all. A survey conducted in the spring of 1965 revealed these mounting difficulties of lay commitment and activity on a congregational level. A parish priest in the village of Candelaria, located in western Cuba, included in his report a comparison between organized lay movements in pre- and post-revolutionary settings:

There were four groups of Catholic Action, the Third Order of the Franciscans, the Confraternity of *La Virgen de la Caridad*. At the moment, there is not even a trace of these associations nor Catholic Action. There is absolutely nothing left.<sup>94</sup>

According to the priest, the local parish had lost all its lay institutions by 1965. What was left were single individuals participating in the life of the Church:

Amidst the inactivity of the groups of Catholic Action, which already vanished, and the associations that used to exist, there are a few faithful who assist with catechism in the parish --, with visiting the sick and saying the rosary in the homes of the deceased if it is requested.<sup>95</sup>

Similar experiences from several dioceses were recounted by both the clergy and laity in the interviews.<sup>96</sup> These accounts suggest that in ecclesial life, there were also cultural and mental distances between cities and rural areas, in addition to the differences in material resources.<sup>97</sup> Yet many of the rural histories remain undisclosed, as histories from Havana came to dominate the narratives as the capital site of the contest for both resistance and repression.

Numerous records such as the one quoted above speak of the frustration among the clergy in the work at hand. The loss of material resources was experienced as an injustice, and a sense of being left alone tormented the priests, who witnessed a significant decrease in participation and the public practicing of religion. Some documents written by the clergy, particularly those residing in rural areas and serving small communities, point towards a lack of communication and understanding between the diocesan clergy and ecclesial hierarchy. “It was like another world,” recalled one of the priests attending a rural community in eastern Cuba in the mid-1960s, “where the bishops, the hierarchy, lived.”<sup>98</sup>

### 3. The Rise of the Laity

Despite the chaotic circumstances of daily life, militant lay Catholics struggled to maintain a sense of purpose. Their search for meaning as Catholics in the revolution was reciprocated by Vatican II’s new openings on the role of the laity. This was reflected in October 1965, when Havana’s auxiliary bishop, Fernando Azcárate, also serving as *asesor*<sup>99</sup> for the Catholic Action, wrote to Raúl Gómez Treto from Rome. In the midst of participating in a session of the Second

94 Han existido las cuatro ramas de Acción Católica, la Tercera Orden Franciscana, La Confradía de la Virgen de la Caridad. En la actualidad no queda ni rastro de todas esas asociaciones y Acción Católica. No queda nada en absoluto. Cuestionario, Candelaria, Fr. José María Biain 22.5.1965.

95 En medio de la inactividad de los grupos de la Acción Católica, ya desaparecidos y de las Asociaciones que han existido, hay algunos feligreses que ayudan en la catequesis parroquial --, en visitar a los enfermos y en rezar el santo rosario en las casas de los difuntos que así lo pidan. Cuestionario, Candelaria, Fr. José María Biain 22.5.1965.

96 For instance, Interview 20; Interview 22; Interview 29.

97 Schmidt has discussed the multiplicity of ecclesial realities on the island, depending on the material, social, and cultural resources available for local communities. See Schmidt 2015, 225–226.

98 Como hubiera sido un otro mundo... Donde vivieron los obispos, la jerarquía. Interview 13.

99 *Asesor* was a priest designated to cooperate with local groups of Catholic Action. The role and importance of *asesores* is discussed, for instance, by Bidegain 1985.



#### IV TESTIMONY OF LIFE: 1962–1968

Vatican Council, Azcárate relayed to Gómez Treto the recent developments of the council and the Cuban bishops in Rome. In particular, Azcárate wrote to Gómez Treto, a prominent lay leader as the president of the national committee of Catholic Action, to bring him up to date on the latest progress made in the conciliar discourse regarding the laity. With apparent enthusiasm, Azcárate wrote:

Yesterday in the conference I had the opportunity to listen to Cardinal Suenens,<sup>100</sup> one of the cornerstones of the council, talking about the pastoral projection of the council; he talked to us about the fundamental role that laypeople will play in its execution. He said that the council represents a new spring for the Church, and when detailing the conquests of the council, he included as one of them the legislation on the laity.<sup>101</sup>

A letter like this, sent from a member of the clergy to a prominent lay activist and from the center of the Catholic world to the periphery of a marginalized church in a revolutionary reality of the Caribbean, illustrates the spirit of the late 1960s both for global Catholicism and within the Cuban Church. Scholarly work has thus far provided little information on these histories: the dimensions and directions of exchange in the reception of the council in Cuba and the junctions for clergy and laity in the council's interpretation offer remarkable information on the inner dynamics of the Cuban Church and the stances and alignments taken. They also show how crucial a role the laity played for the continuity of everyday ecclesial life in Cuba.

Currently available archival sources, such as Azcárate's correspondence with Gómez Treto, show that not only did representatives of the Cuban Church participate in the conciliar sessions; they also communicated the course of events from the Vatican to Cuba directly. In the midst of the most crucial time in the polarization of Church–State relations, the bishops were able to participate in the conciliar sessions and convey their meaning in Cuba. Correspondingly, the proceedings of the council, with the documentation published as the voice of the council, were received in Cuba both with interest and with the sense that they pertained to the most urgent topics for the Church to address, despite an awareness of how limited the Church's resources were for responding to the new vision.

Archival sources on lay correspondence suggest that Vatican II was experienced as a particularly powerful moment by Cuba's militant laity. For them, the council carried immediate repercussions in the openings it offered for lay agency and autonomy, allowing as it did for greater freedom of expression for the laity. According to Cuban lay leaders, the "actualization" of conciliar theology enabled a renewed understanding of lay spirituality. Furthermore, the "progressive opening" of the universal Church manifested itself "in the unceasing and active search for an appropriate spirituality" incarnate in the laity.<sup>102</sup> The ultimate vision of revitalizing

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100 Belgian cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens, archbishop of Malines-Brussels, was among the most prominent fathers of the council. He acted as a moderator of conciliar sessions and was considered to hold significant influence on the course of the council in addition to hosting good working relations with the pope. Theologically, he aligned with the majority of the conciliar fathers in decision-making and was considered a leader among the majority. O'Malley 2008, 117–118, 157, 327. As Oliver notes, Suenens had expressed his opposition to the monopoly exercised by Catholic Action in lay participation in 1957. See Oliver 2008, 280.

101 Ayer en una conferencia que tuve oportunidad de oírle al Cardenal Suenens, una de las columnas del Concilio, hablando de la "Proyección pastoral del Concilio", no decía el papel fundamental que han de jugar los laicos en su ejecución. Dijo que el Concilio es una nueva primavera de la Iglesia, y al detallar las conquistas del Concilio incluía como una de ellas lo legislado sobre el laicado. AHAH AC JN Fernando Azcárate to Raúl Gómez Treto 10.10.1965.

102 AHAH AC JN Memorandum 3.10.1965.

lay agency was to enable a progressive opening of lay Catholics towards God and “our brothers and sisters,”<sup>103</sup> and a renewed spirit of service of Cuban laity to the world.<sup>104</sup>

As Azcárate’s letter indicated, the council marked a window of opportunity for the Cuban laity. The council affirmed the apostolate of the laity in the Church with a sacramental basis on baptism and confirmation. The role of the laity was twofold: to help others in their growth towards God, and to bring love and justice to the daily milieus of the laity. In order to effectively fulfill their vocation, the laity required training and spiritual formation, provided via close collaboration between clergy and laity.<sup>105</sup> For Cuba, Vatican II thus provided a framework for development of both the theology of the laity<sup>106</sup> and the apostolate of the laity.<sup>107</sup> A new focus on ecclesiological self-understanding emphasized the equal role of clergy and laity in composing the Church as the People of God.<sup>108</sup>

As was noted in Cuba, the newly expressed recognition of the laity was a global trend: by sharing it, the Cuban Church also joined those endorsing Vatican II and sought to implement conciliar theology on the island. Yet, as a distinctively Cuban trait, one both stemming from and responding to the tense circumstances, the sense of increased lay agency did not erase the predominance of Catholic Action or the ardent adherence of its members to ecclesial hierarchy: throughout the discourse, the loyalty to bishops was emphasized as a distinctive commitment of a “well-informed, conscious, vigilant laity.”<sup>109</sup>

In 1965, the Church in Cuba began to explore a project of reorganizing its lay participation, fueled by conciliar teaching on the participation of the laity in the life and mission of the Church and the creation of the Apostolate of the Laity as a structure enabling organizational changes.<sup>110</sup> The vocation of laypeople in the life of the Church and endorsement of lay movements began to deconstruct the assumptions of clericalism, clerical superiority and authority in ecclesial life, and the division between the clergy and laity in the Church.<sup>111</sup>

At the same time, lay leaders provocatively suggested that conciliar theology was received with great interest predominantly by the laity and not the clergy. In a bitter remark, one lay leader in Santiago de Cuba noted, “I don’t think the Council has arrived to many of the

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103 In this context, it is not clear whether the expression refers to brothers and sisters within the Catholic communities in Cuba, or non-Catholics, revolutionaries, Marxists, communists, and all Cubans alike. A reference to the spirit of service in the world supports the more inclusive reading.

104 AHAH AC JN Orientación general y plan de adviento, noviembre de 1964; AHAH AC JN Memorandum 3.10.1965.

105 AA; O’Malley 2008, 230.

106 Theology of the Laity in Cuba was rooted in pre-conciliar understanding stemming largely from the auto-definition of Catholic Action. After the council, the Cuban Church still considered Catholic Action synonymous with lay participation through organized structures. The interpretation is concurrent with Vatican II’s treatment of the laity. According to Faggioli, “Vatican II maintained the concept of a lay apostolate next to the ideal of Catholic Action, slightly more independent from the ecclesial hierarchy but still in need of a ‘mandate’ coming from the hierarchy and faithful to the teaching of the Church.” Faggioli 2012, 8.

107 AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín No 5 Enero 1965 Plan de Trabajo para 1965; AHAH AC JF La Habana Raúl Gómez Treto to Josefina Moreno 30.9.1965.

108 “People of God” was among the most significant ecclesiological principles of the council. The concept referred to the emphasis placed on people, the community, as the primary subject of the church. In Latin America, “People of God” became a fundamental concept for self-identification and pastoral work, both theologically and on the grassroots level. For the original text on the People of God by Vatican II, see LG.

109 AHAH AC JN Memorandum 3.10.1965.

110 Oliver 2008, 272–273, 279–280.

111 Oliver 2008, 280–282.

priests” in the archdiocese.<sup>112</sup> His observation was further echoed in Havana: “The obstacle against the promotion of the laity is clerical paternalism, already surpassed in theory by many but in practice only by few. From there emerge the oversensitivity and frictions that both discourage and paralyze.”<sup>113</sup> These excerpts suggest that at a time of external turmoil and the challenges posed for ecclesial life by the revolution, internal tensions within the Church also generated contesting visions of power and authority. The laity was no longer perceived as the receiving audience in ecclesial life. They were growing in self-identification as the subjects of their own religious reality: within the Church, “the grand mass of her children, those forming the laity, have arrived into adulthood with all of its meanings. This has been made evident in the light of the Council.”<sup>114</sup>

In 1965, Catholic Action represented the dominant form of lay participation on the island. In its nature, Catholic Action as a global movement was characterized by hierarchical structures and an institutionalized role officially established and publicly supported by ecclesial authorities.<sup>115</sup> In this context, the reorganization of Catholic Action in Cuba represented a local process in the chain of changes that occurred in the Catholic Church and its view of the laity from the 1960s onwards. This, in turn, was inextricably linked to the redefinition of ecclesiology in the wake of Vatican II.<sup>116</sup> In Cuba, it was hoped that the reorganization would result in revitalization and the reinvigorated commitment of laypeople in the daily life of the Church.<sup>117</sup> Also, nuncio Zacchi was conscious of the project and expressed his warm support for it, referring to it as a “natural adaptation to these times,”<sup>118</sup> thus again signaling the Holy See’s vision of accommodation in Cuban Church–State relations.

According to the interviewees, the new vision on the apostolate of the laity also provided the Cuban Church with an opportunity to deconstruct the political affiliations of its pre-conciliar lay movements and highlight their spiritual meaning for the Cuban laity. This concerned first and foremost Catholic Action and its numerous sub-organizations.<sup>119</sup> Yet for this very reason, as also Uría suggests, the plan sparked controversy and resistance: for some, the restructuring appeared as an attempt to dispose of Catholic Action. In Santiago de Cuba, Archbishop Pérez Serantes had initially rejected the rumored changes and, by defending Catholic Action, argued for stability in the face of changes occurring in all sectors of Cuban society and in the lives of all Cubans.<sup>120</sup>

The key individuals participating in the planning were also clearly aware of joining the global Catholic project of redefining lay participation and the laity’s role in ecclesial life. In his

112 AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 14.9.1965.

113 Los obstáculos que a la promoción del laicado oponen frecuentemente el paternalismo clericalista, teóricamente trasnochado para muchos pero prácticamente solo superado por unos pocos. Así surgen las hipersusceptibilizaciones y los rozamientos que tanto desaniman y paralizan. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 9.9.1965.

114 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 9.9.1965.

115 Bidegain 1985; Faggioli 2016, 14.

116 AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 4.7.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 5.7.1965; AHAH AC JN Enrique Pérez Serantes to Raúl Gómez Treto 12.7.1965; Faggioli 2016, 2.

117 AHAH AC JN Plan de Trabajo de la Junta Diocesana de La Habana a realizar en los meses comprendidos entre agosto de 1965 a abril 1966 31.7.1965.

118 Con su natural adaptación a los tiempos. AHAH AC JN Cesar Zacchi to G. P. 15.2.1965.

119 Interview 1; Interview 2; Interview 6; Interview 27.

120 Uría 2011, 532.

letters to the local leaders of Catholic Action, Gómez Treto repeatedly referred to Vatican II and its teaching, calling the reformation of Catholic Action an “apostolic mission.”<sup>121</sup> Correspondence between Havana, Camagüey, Matanzas, and Santiago de Cuba discussed the renewed role of the laity. Gómez Treto outlined for Santiago’s archbishop Pérez Serantes that the focus of the project was to restructure the institutional engagement of laypeople by creating structures of lay participation in the administration of the Church on the congregational, diocesan, and national levels: bodies of representatives consisting of all ages of laypeople, both men and women.<sup>122</sup>

Deconstructing the old and refining the new frames of work for Cuban laity was understood, foremost by the laity themselves, as both a global process of restructuring and a response to the situation in Cuba. According to Gómez Treto, the process was also a step towards accepting the prevailing circumstances and, as such, a sign of progress.<sup>123</sup> For the episcopal hierarchy, on the other hand, the restructuring provided an opportunity to renew the image of Catholic Action from that of a militant, socially reactionary and politicized Catholic movement to a more generic frame that enabled lay participation in the life of the Church.

Renewing the role and participation of the laity was considered possible in the dioceses of Havana, Santiago de Cuba, Matanzas, Pinar del Río, Camagüey, and Holguín.<sup>124</sup> The restructuring effort was led from Havana, which sometimes resulted in misinformation and a lack of direction in other cities.<sup>125</sup> In the archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba, the lay leaders of Catholic Action analyzed the situation, coming to the conclusion that it was necessary to restructure and renew lay participation in local congregational life. In the diocese, approximately 30 people participated in the process.<sup>126</sup> Havana’s Archbishop Evelio Díaz, as the president of the Cuban Episcopal Conference (*Conferencia Episcopal Cubana*, CEC), was nominally in charge of the process and was kept informed on the national revision.<sup>127</sup>

The hopes for restructured lay participation revealed the discrepancies and competing visions of power among the Cuban clergy and laity. At stake in the process was also the improvement of relations between the laity and clergy and the revolution’s vision of committed laity as automatically being a suspect group. In his letter to Havana’s Archbishop Evelio Díaz Cía, Gómez Treto wished to make this complex public perception known. “Do you even know how much we need to be allowed to show ourselves and try to erase the false impression that

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121 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 13.12.1965.

122 AHAH AC JN Organización: plan parroquial 20.9.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Enrique Pérez Serantes 25.11.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó.

123 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 13.12.1965.

124 AHAH AC JN Junta Nacional to Teresa de Rojas 27.7.1965; AHAH AC JN Junta Nacional to Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera 25.8.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 9.9.1965.

125 The planning was led by the laypeople who initiated the first stages and carried out the planning. Most of the correspondence imagining the future and the new practices of Catholic Action took place between Raúl Gómez Treto, the president of the national committee and Havana’s sub-organization, Emilio Roca Notó, Santiago de Cuba’s local president, Camagüey’s local lay leaders Juan Pulido and Carlota Vidaud, and Teresa de Rojas in Matanzas. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Teresa de Rojas 25.8.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 13.12.1965.

126 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 13.12.1965.

127 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Enrique Pérez Serantes 25.11.1965.

they have of us and our work in some places?”<sup>128</sup> he asked, emphasizing the importance of the episcopate in assuming a realistic vision of the difficulties faced by the laity in the daily context of the revolution.<sup>129</sup>

The support of the episcopate was considered crucial for the project.<sup>130</sup> In Santiago Cuba, Pérez Serantes, known as a dedicated supporter of Catholic Action and lay agency, embraced the attempt and went so far as to independently plan the writing of a nationwide pastoral letter, 8,000 copies in total, addressing the vitality and importance of lay empowerment.<sup>131</sup> At the same time, as proposed by Uría, he dedicated considerable energy to communicating with local priests in an attempt to encourage them and boost their morale.<sup>132</sup> Also involved in the process of lifting spirits through renewal was Father Pedro Meurice, nominated by Pérez Serantes to serve as the vice-chancellor and chancellor of the Archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba as a representative of the clergy.<sup>133</sup>

Even though laypeople expressed that they were aware of the need to include the episcopal hierarchy, they at times preferred work among just the laity and clergy.<sup>134</sup> In the process, the direction of input flowed from the laity to the clergy.<sup>135</sup> Laypeople engaged in the restructuring effort found that sometimes cooperation with the clergy posed a challenge to moving forward, too. As an early reflection of the pre-conciliar, later contested clergy–laity dichotomy, and one of the first steps in the laicalization of the Church in Cuba, the president of Catholic Action in Santiago de Cuba, Emilio Roca Notó, wrote to Gómez Treto: “We are trying to handle this with silk gloves, we don’t want them [the clergy] to think that this has been a victory for us and a defeat for them; we are all Christians here and there shouldn’t be winners and those are defeated.”<sup>136</sup>

Referring to the disputes between laypeople on how to organize Catholic Action in Santiago de Cuba and to the varying degrees of support for Catholic Action by the clergy, Roca Notó explained the challenges in proposing changes to long-prevailing structures and institutions. This type of correspondence mirrored the laity’s preoccupation with the clergy attempting to diminish the need for lay organizations. Yet at the same time, the letters also mirrored the attempts of the Cuban laity to use the prevailing politically and socially charged atmosphere to challenge the clergy’s authority. For some priests, this resulted in opposing the restructuring of

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128 Sabe Ud., cuánto necesitamos se nos permita manifestarnos y tratar de borrar la errónea impresión que de nosotros y de nuestra obra existe en algunos lugares. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Evelio Díaz Cía 30.9.1965.

129 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 23.7.1965.

130 AHAH AC JN Junta Nacional to Jose A. Domínguez 25.8.1965.

131 AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 4.7.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Enrique Pérez Serantes 30.9.1965; AHAH AC JN Enrique Pérez Serantes to Raúl Gómez Treto 6.10.1965 COCC REC *Sin título*.

132 Uría 2011, 516–517.

133 AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 4.7.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Enrique Pérez Serantes 25.11.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 30.11.1965; AHAH AC JN Enrique Pérez Serantes to Raúl Gómez Treto 10.12.1965.

134 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó *sin fecha*.

135 AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 11.10.1965; AHAH AC JN José Luis to Raúl Gómez Treto 19.10.1965.

136 Nosotros estamos tratando de tratar esto con guante de seda ya que no queremos que ellos piensen que ha sido una victoria nuestra y una derrota de ellos, aquí estamos entre cristianos y no puede ni debe haber vencedores ni vencidos. AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 25.11.1965.

Catholic Action, and thus, the increasing influence of the laity in the governance of the Church.<sup>137</sup> Lay leaders were doubtful about whether local clergy wanted to engage in lay movements and cooperate with them within their respective dioceses.<sup>138</sup> Particularly with respect to implementing the council's teaching on the laity in Cuba, laypeople seemed more proactive in comparison to the clergy's more tentative responses. With more progressive ideas and a sense of urgency in responding to the challenges of the Church both globally and in the Cuban context, the stance taken by the militant laity confronted the more cautious positions assumed by the clergy.

In the archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba, difficulties in communication and the coordination of work were explained by the long distances not only geographically but also regarding the contesting visions of the clergy and clergy. This led to the lay leaders seeking more legitimization from the episcopate—and also to noting the paradox in the laity resorting to high-level policy making instead of grassroots agency, as was, according to them, expected from them in the eyes of the clergy.<sup>139</sup> Despite these tensions, the lay leaders continued to envision a church of the laity. Santiago de Cuba's Roca Notó received a letter of reassurance from Gómez Treto urging him to push forward with the changes and assume a role of authority over the reluctant clergy: "The priests believe less than us in the necessity of having the sub-organizations, that's for sure. But we know more of this than the priests, and we already try to make them learn what they need to learn and know as much as we do."<sup>140</sup> The discourse on restructuring lay agency shed light on the dynamics of power and authority within the Church and the multiple agencies invested in defining the future course of the Church. The political situation of the revolution, the polarization in Church-State relations and the internal disputes on how to respond to these challenges became visible when the Church faced challenges from within as to either protect its tradition or explore new openings.

The discourse also revealed the lack of coherence in ecclesial life on the congregational level: for the past few years, groups in Santiago de Cuba had been operating on their own, without following the lead from Havana, as the national committee based in the capital had expected. At the early stages of restructuring, the dynamics were also unclear regarding the power of lay groups over each other. For Santiago de Cuba's lay leaders, it was not always clear whether Havana's authority would override their local traditions and practices. Yet, despite the differences in operation, Santiago assured Havana of its support and obedience in the spirit of Catholic Action's hierarchical structure and levels of autonomy.<sup>141</sup> The conversations that unfolded were essentially about internal tensions and struggles for power and authority of the laity, as they pitted national and local bodies of representatives against each other when revising policies and structures.

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137 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Enrique Pérez Serantes 25.11.1965.

138 AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 14.9.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Alfredo Muller San Martín 3.10.1965.

139 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 9.9.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó *sin fecha*.

140 Los curas creen menos que nosotros en la necesidad de la Ramas, cierto. Pero es que nosotros sabemos de esto más que los curas, y ya trataremos de hacer que ellos aprendan lo necesario y sepan tanto como nosotros. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó *sin fecha*.

141 AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 14.9.1965.

As the case of the restructuring of the laity shows, committed laypeople intended to assume more responsibility in the Church following the years of dramatic marginalization of the Church in the revolution. Although Catholic Action had diminished remarkably in numbers and consisted only of the most militant of lay Catholics, it continued to represent of predominant institutional commitment of the laity to the Church. After the deportations of clergy and religious orders, laypeople assumed considerable agency in their parishes, even assuming administrative responsibilities in lieu of priests. Concurring with this argument is Pedraza's case study of a young Catholic woman, which describes active laypeople maintaining the daily functions of local churches. According to Pedraza, the woman in her study "did nearly everything: she took care of the accounts, prepared the baptisms, rang the bells, and even gave a service with the consecrated hosts the priest left behind."<sup>142</sup>

Assuming responsibility also included the further exercising of power. In interviews, the contemporaries engaged in the restructuring recollected the shift in agency and initiative not only as source of occasionally emerging internal tensions between clergy and laity on the island, but also in regard to the laity's social status and interaction with the surrounding revolutionary society.<sup>143</sup> Whereas militant members at the time strived for more agency and power within the Church, the masses that had formerly comprised the grand majority of lay audiences had disappeared from the ecclesial sphere. The militant members of Catholic Action, those governing and leading the national or diocesan committees, were a group of extraordinarily committed laypeople. While their agency must be analyzed in depth as the most active lay participation in the life the Church, they cannot be taken as a representation of the laity as a whole—or at least a focus on this group of individuals transforms the definition of laity.

In the daily life of the revolution, committed laypeople who publicly affiliated with the Church were constantly aware of the perception of them as *gusanos*, worms, traitors not associated with the revolution. In September 1965, leaders of Santiago de Cuba's Catholic Action issued a recommendation to all members to abstain from using any visible signs of their affiliation with Catholic Action as a measure of precaution: "For now, we recommend total cancellation of using bracelets, insignias, banners, hymns, virtually anything that externally expresses our organizational nature in Catholic Action, including letterheads in correspondence."<sup>144</sup> The message portrayed a striking shift in attitude to that taken in the early stages of the revolution, when wearing visible symbols of a cross and a star, symbolizing faith and patriotism, had been a point of pride for young Catholic adults in particular. It had been a sign of their commitment to their fatherland as Catholics, including the revolutionary process.<sup>145</sup>

Yet in September 1965, the warning against public signs of militant lay membership reflected the continuously perceived hostility towards organized religious movements in the revolutionary reality, and the reference to correspondence implied the common belief that written exchanges between Catholics were monitored by the State. The same belief was echoed,

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142 Pedraza 2007, 241.

143 Interview 27.

144 Recomendamos supresión total por ahora de brazaletes, distintivos, banderas, himnos, en fin cualquier cosa que exteriormente pregone nuestro carácter de organización de Acción Católica, inclusive membretes en la correspondencia. AHAH AC JN Organización: plano parroquial 20.9.1965.

145 DM 8.3.1959 Gran concentración católica celebraron jóvenes estudiantes.

and at times also confirmed, by the seals of the Ministry of Communications in correspondence either intercepted, confiscated, or revised by government officials.<sup>146</sup> In personal correspondence, lay leaders in Havana, Santiago de Cuba, and Camagüey began to use their private postal addresses and address each other as individuals instead of Catholic Action's officers with organizational titles in 1965.<sup>147</sup>

The policy did not, however, extend to celebrating the association's most important annual festivity: the Day of Catholic Action in November. Extensive collections of correspondence show that simultaneously with issuing the ban on visible symbols, the leaders of the national committee approached all local ecclesial authorities and chairpersons in the laity with instructions on how to dedicate the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, 1965, as the official day of Catholic Action with the intention of intensely promoting the association.<sup>148</sup> The remaining members of the movement in local communities gathered to celebrate the Mass in order to promote awareness of the existence of the organization. The celebration was conducted under the authority of respective bishops and with the help of local priests who responded positively to Catholic Action.<sup>149</sup> At the same time, the local group in Camagüey launched a campaign asking priests to also post Catholic Action's materials on the notice boards in neighborhood churches—first of all, by keeping the slogan of the organization, “Embracing the Truth, we grow in Charity,” in clear sight.<sup>150</sup>

Camagüey's local group also desired that Havana's national committee of Catholic Action would provide their clergy with materials on liturgy, catechism studies, and reflection on matrimony.<sup>151</sup> Throughout the 1960s, Catholic Action provided dioceses with large amounts of material for liturgical celebrations, seasonal festivities, and spiritual exercises as well as discussion material for considering the Church's role in Cuba's changing social sphere. Lay committees producing the materials delivered them not only to local lay groups, but also directly to bishops and clergy as normative materials.<sup>152</sup> While the national committee of Catholic Action produced most of the materials for nationwide distribution, it also received circulated materials from provincial organizations and used them to revise old resources.<sup>153</sup> These examples illustrate both the material scarcity witnessed in local parishes and the role of laypeople in providing for their parishes additional material resources. They also show that the laity possessed considerable autonomy with regard to the priests, and that the direction of influence flowed from the laity to the clergy. As the example of Camagüey suggests, embedded in this exchange of materials and influence was also the idea that laypeople sometimes acted

146 For instance, AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Juan Pulido 3.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Alfredo Muller San Martin 3.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Carlota Vidaud 29.11.1965.

147 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Carlota Vidaud 7.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to C. P. 17.1.1965.

148 For instance, AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Juan Pulido 3.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Alfero Muller San Martin 3.10.1965.

149 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Teresa de Rojas 30.9.1965.

150 AHAH AC JN Carlota Vidaud to Raúl Gómez Treto 31.10.1965.

151 AHAH AC JN Carlota Vidaud to Raúl Gómez Treto 31.10.1965.

152 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Alfredo Muller 25.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to José A. Domínguez 25.10.1965.

153 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Carlota Vidaud 25.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Carlota Vidaud to Raúl Gómez Treto 31.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Ana Dolores García to Raúl Gómez Treto 6.11.1965; AHAH AC JN Ana Dolores García to Raúl Gómez Treto 6.11.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Adolfo Rodríguez 25.11.1965.



more actively and responsively than the priests.

In the interviews, a sense of ownership over the Church emerged when recalling this period.<sup>154</sup> It is crucial to note that the influence of laypeople extended from the distribution of material resources to the production of theological and pastoral contents. In the materials, the committees quoted articles, radio programs, discussions, and debates originating from Catholic theologians mostly in Europe. Through this exchange, the materials for study and liturgical celebration also transmitted information on recent theological reflections, especially stemming from the conciliar theology formulated at Vatican II. As such, laypeople assumed a vital role in transmitting the council to Cuba and within Cuba, as the circulation of these materials reached all dioceses on the island.

With increasing lay agency emerged, too, a sense of commitment and purpose. Lay leaders attempted to raise spirits by arguing that the social context was, in fact, fertile soil for lay agency. Yet, as discussed by Crahan, many of them continued to feel suppressed by the clerical leadership of the Church.<sup>155</sup> As the correspondence between lay leaders suggests, contestation grew from the experience of the laity feeling underappreciated by the clergy. Some of this sentiment was transferred to the rhetoric of lay leaders: in internal correspondence, militants of Catholic Action employed phrases commonly used by the revolution, such as “*hasta la victoria siempre*,”<sup>156</sup> in reference to the empowerment of the laity within the Church. In an attempt to remain optimistic, the lay leaders described their project as a destiny-like fulfillment within the Church. In this spiritual emphasis, the future of lay movements was also placed in the hands of *La Virgen de La Caridad del Cobre*, whose intercession inextricably connected the experiences of the laity in the 1960s with the continuum of Cuban lay devotion to the Mother of the *patria*.<sup>157</sup>

At the same time, letters by lay leaders echoed a sense of stagnation and a struggle to maintain a vision with purpose in the declining material and emotional atmosphere. With irreversible changes in individual trajectories of life in the revolution, the exodus of Catholics from the island, and the elimination of religion from public imagery, lay leaders maintained *la lucha*,<sup>158</sup> a fight for improvement. “If it’s the time to wait and work, like P. Serantes says, we must work with the enthusiasm of those sure of the victory,” wrote Gómez Treto to Santiago de Cuba.<sup>159</sup> From an ecclesiological standpoint, maintaining a prospect of the future was crucial for the Church since it was rooted in the promise of hope. In the late 1960s, Havana’s lay Catholics found hope not in the Cuban circumstances but in the Cuban people instead. In the midst of declining participation, material scarcity, and the antireligious atmosphere, the future of the Church could be envisioned “not because circumstances are improving, but because we

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154 For instance, Interview 11; Interview 27; Interview 28.

155 Crahan 1985.

156 AHAH AC JN José Luis to Raúl Gómez Treto 19.10.1965.

157 AHAH AC JD La Habana Fernando Azcárate y G. P. to Lorenzo Hernández 18.6.1965; AHAH AC JD La Habana Fernando Azcárate y G. P. to Beba de Rojas 18.6.1965.

158 *La Lucha* is a recurring Cuban concept, referring to a struggle for liberation. It originates from the 19th century struggle against Spain, later transformed into liberation struggles from the United States. De La Torre argues that another meaning of *la lucha* stems from the exile narrative, focusing on the struggle against Castro and the Cuban revolution. De La Torre 2002, 108–109.

159 Si el tiempo es de esperar y obrar, como dice P. Serantes, hemos de obrar con el entusiasmo de quien va al éxito seguro. Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 22.10.1965.

are improving ourselves before the circumstances.”<sup>160</sup>

In the interviews, former militant members of Catholic Action discussed a renewed clarity in the sense of purpose and belonging. Calling the years following the most critical conflict with the revolutionary regime a “beautiful time” for the Church, both laypeople and the clergy now reflect on the era as a time of intense vocation and commitment. For the militant laity, the declining resources provided a space for agency; in terms of personal experiences, what was institutionally a catastrophe became a period of deep personal commitment. The years were recalled by one laywoman as follows: “First and foremost, that era was a good era, because there was a sense of a community, very few priests and those who maintained the communities: us.”<sup>161</sup>

The scarcity of material resources and circumstances of popular opinion limited the mobility of the laity. Inter-diocesan meetings, communication, and collaboration had become more difficult; only two or three lay representatives from each diocese were able to attend the national lay meeting at Havana’s seminary in August 1965.<sup>162</sup> The hardships and challenges were frequently discussed by lay leaders. In a letter to Archbishop Pérez Serantes, Gómez Treto wrote: “We are aware of our limitations and know well the difficulties that await us as we move forward.”<sup>163</sup> In order to overcome the challenges, lay leaders were pushing the Church to accept the changes and adjust to them, but on the terms of the Church and not the government. They warned the clergy against a rigidity of attitudes and dogmatic paralysis, demanding better recognition of the prevailing circumstances. Readjustments in ecclesial life could not be avoided, they declared. But the source of such readjustments of the Cuban Church should be found within the community and by religious sense-making of the revolution. This, lay leaders emphasized, would require the collaboration of clergy and laity, even if the clergy would first have to accept the laity as their equals.<sup>164</sup>

This exchange again reveals the dualistic perception of ecclesial life in Cuba in the late 1960s: the simultaneous urge to see a way forward for the Church in the dramatically changing circumstances through renewal and lay participation in particular, and the almost-devastating, oft recurring realization of the many obstacles on the road. The Cuban lay leaders were also aware that the crisis facing Catholic Action on the island echoed the global transformation of the Church and the decline and changing patterns of participation in lay mass movements.<sup>165</sup> Despite the obvious challenges posed by the revolution, the decline of lay institutions also echoed more generally the changing landscape of Catholic lay participation, which was, in turn, influenced by the global changes in social, political, and ideological movements of the 1960s.<sup>166</sup>

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160 No tanto porque las cosas mejoren como porque mejoremos nosotros ante las cosas AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 13.12.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó.

161 Pero ante todo, esta época fue una buena época, porque había un sentido de comunidad, muy pocos sacerdotes, y los que mantenemos las comunidades: nosotros. Interview 11.

162 AHAH AC JN Junta Nacional to Teresa de Rojas 23.7.1965. For a discussion on the financial resources of travel in the Archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba, in particular, see Uría 2011, 535.

163 Conocemos nuestras limitaciones y sabemos de las dificultades que nos esperan en el camino a recorrer. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Enrique Pérez Serantes 5.7.1965.

164 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó *sin fecha*.

165 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 9.9.1965.

166 O’Malley 2008, 291.

#### IV TESTIMONY OF LIFE: 1962–1968

Simultaneously with the overarching crisis of lay participation on the island, grassroots communities formed by the remaining laity continued to practice their Catholic faith in the daily course of life. In 1964 and 1965, Advent season, Christmas, Epiphany, the Lenten season, and Easter were all celebrated by local churches as usual.<sup>167</sup> Communities promoted acts of devotion such as prayer either individually or collectively; they promoted rosary meditations, Eucharistic adoration, the Liturgy of the Hours, and Mass.<sup>168</sup> At the same time, lay leaders encouraged Catholics to offer small communitarian acts of fraternity to each other, such as visits, meetings, luncheons, and shared meals. The activities also served to reinforce the communities by offering shared experiences. The focus of these activities was on nurturing the communitarian spirit and reinforcing communities.<sup>169</sup>

Yet, the number of people openly proclaiming their Catholic faith in the public sphere of the revolution was decreasing. Correspondence from local communities to diocesan centers, from clerics to bishops, addressed the fear experienced by laypeople in their daily public manifestations of religiosity. These experiences were further echoed in interviews. Some recalled feeling a sense of anxiety about the UMAP camps to which Catholic priests and the laity were known to have been sent “for being Catholics.”<sup>170</sup> After being released from UMAP camps, some formerly practicing Catholics did not return to the Church, despite staying on the island, while others left the country.<sup>171</sup> Both the clergy and laity feared arrest and imprisonment. Some worried for their children and the way they were treated by their peers; others had reported incidents in neighborhoods, the public chastising of practicing Catholics, and accusations of treason.<sup>172</sup> Clergy and members of religious orders acknowledged cases of parents being afraid to baptize their children in public; baptisms were conducted without formal recognition and celebration. Sometimes young mothers travelled to visit their relatives in other town or villages and had their children baptized away from home in order to avoid public stigmatization.<sup>173</sup>

The fear experienced by laypeople resulted in declining participation and pushed clerics to react. In 1965, the Diocese of Havana offered a course on Christian formation, its teaching focusing on dogma, the Bible, and liturgy for the laity. Alfredo Petit Vergel, the priest in charge of the course, argued for the sense of urgency in empowering the laity and increasing their commitment to the Church:

Today more than ever, this majority of the People of God, the laity, are experiencing inescapable anxiety to complete and deepen their knowledge of the Christian mystery. In our fatherland, this necessity arises with more urgency every day, and those of us who as ministers of Christ and his Church are preaching His

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167 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to C. P. 17.1.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Enrique Pérez Serantes 5.7.1965; AHAH AC JN Memorandum 10/1965; AHAH AC JN Agape de Navidad 25.12.1965; AHAH AC JN Modesto Pena Paz to Junta Nacional *sin fecha*.

168 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Teresa de Rojas 30.9.1965; AHAH AC JN Memorandum 3.10.1965.

169 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 30.9.1965; AHAH AC JN Memorandum 10/1965; AHAH AC JN F.L.A.C. *sin fecha*.

170 Interview 18; Interview 22. From Havana, the priests Jaime Ortega Alamino and Alfredo Petit Vergel were sent to UMAP. The collective fear of UMAP is discussed in Interview 13; Interview; Interview 22; Interview 29. For discussions on UMAP by scholarly work, see Super 2003; Pedraza 2007, 123–125; Padgett 2008, 106–107.

171 Interview 22.

172 Interview 29.

173 Interview 28.

#### IV TESTIMONY OF LIFE: 1962–1968

word and administering His sacraments, remark with pain that our resources are not sufficient, even superficially, to such pressing demand.<sup>174</sup>

In collaboration with Havana's branch of Catholic Action, the course was held at the premises of the archdiocese at the Cardinal Palace, and it was inaugurated by Archbishop Díaz Cía.<sup>175</sup> Convening three times a week for a duration of nine months, the aim of the course was to educate the laity in order for them to become teachers of their peers in local communities.<sup>176</sup> The course was intended for those who "feel the urge to broaden their knowledge in order to become laypeople in charge of their formation in local communities."<sup>177</sup> Further echoing the ecclesiology of Vatican II, the course was organized as a way for the laity to "realize their mission."<sup>178</sup> A report delivered after the initiation of the course alluded to the fact that the course began "without difficulties" with 656 participants in total, which was considered a great success.<sup>179</sup>

Already in the late 1960s, a sense of urgency to further study the Cuban reality and prevailing social context was gaining support among the militant laity, sometimes meeting with resistance by the clergy, though. A layperson recalls study material exploring the social commitment and participation of Catholics in the revolutionary society prepared and circulated in the town of Matanzas as early as in the last years of the 1960s.<sup>180</sup> In the broader vision of lay formation, significant emphasis was placed on constructing "an integral vision of theology of God, humankind, society, history and the world," aiming to form "a vision of the 'humane' in service of the divine plan and, consequently, a spirit of openness to the world."<sup>181</sup>

The vision both stemmed from the singularity of the Cuban experience and employed an exemplary role for the entire region. Discussions of lay leaders show that the situation of the Church on the island was mirrored against the global context, emphasizing the need to study the Catholic Church from global perspectives, particularly in Latin America with respect to the singular challenges of the continent: urban and rural realities, inequalities, and changes in pastoral work.<sup>182</sup> Lessons for Cuba could be learned from the outside, and furthermore, Cuba could serve as a lesson for the rest of Latin America not despite the challenges in purposeful ecclesial life, but precisely because of them:

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174 Hoy más que nunca, esa porción mayoritaria del Pueblo del Dios, que son los laicos, se encuentran experimentando con angustia ineludible la necesidad de completar y ahondar su conocimiento del Misterio Cristiano. En nuestra patria, esta necesidad se plantea con más urgencia cada día y los que como Ministros del Cristo y de Su Iglesia predicamos su Palabra y administramos sus Sacramentos, vemos con dolor que no damos a basta para atender, si quiera sea someramente, a tan inaplazable exigencia. AHAH AC JN Alfredo Petit Vergel 15.9.1965.

175 AHAH AC JN Junta Diocesana de La Acción Católica Cubana 15.9.1965.

176 AHAH AC JD La Habana Junta Diocesana de Acción Católica de La Habana 15.9.1965.

177 AHAH AC JN Junta Diocesana de La Acción Católica Cubana 15.9.1965.

178 AHAH AC JD La Habana Querido Hermano en el Sacerdocio by Alfredo Petit Vergel, *sin fecha*.

179 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 22.10.1965; AHAH AC JD La Habana Junta Diocesana de Acción Católica de La Habana 14.11.1965.

180 Interview 17.

181 Una visión teológica integral de Dios, del hombre, de la sociedad, de la historia y del mundo -- una valoración de lo "humano" en función del plan divino y, por consiguiente, un espíritu de apertura al mundo. AHAH AC JD La Habana Proyecto de la comisión para el plan de trabajo de la Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana. *Sin fecha*.

182 AHAH AC JD La Habana Proyecto de la comisión para el plan de trabajo de la Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana. *Sin fecha*.

#### IV TESTIMONY OF LIFE: 1962–1968

Despite the intrinsic difficulties to this purpose, it is not a responsibility which we could consider ourselves exempt from. Strongly to the contrary, for the distinct circumstances of our social environment, us Cubans could contribute to this field an experience that will prove useful and enriching for the entire Church.<sup>183</sup>

Remarkably, the gaze towards Latin America was explored simultaneously by both the Church and the revolutionary government in distinct contexts: while the Cuban Church sought to understand ecclesial modernity in a global perspective, aspirations of revolutionary internationalism had awoken within the leadership of the revolution. In the latter half the 1960s, the Cuban revolution was exported to Latin America, as famously depicted by Che Guevara.<sup>184</sup> This nexus further points towards the myriad of connections weaving Cuban Catholicism and the revolution together, also in patterns of global encounters and exchange.

From the council, an ideal of missionary participation began to emerge within the Cuban Church. Lay leaders began to discuss improving relations with “our separates brothers and sisters and non-religious [Cubans]”, driven by “a genuinely Christian missionary spirit—projection of charity and love of thy neighbor in promotion of the common good (incarnated in daily life).”<sup>185</sup> Missionary aspirations connected the Cuban laity to the circumstances they lived in, for the spirituality of the laity “cannot be separated from direct reference to the exterior, the social sphere, material and interconnected.”<sup>186</sup> While the Cuban State was reinforcing a policy of allowing Christian worship only inside particular houses of worship, with no social visibility, militant laypeople were referring to the integral mission of all laity, urging them to step outside the church buildings and take their visible stance among civic life:

They leave the church building and go to the sites, to centers of entertainment, of studies, of work; to all sites where men and women live who perhaps were once baptized and now remain indifferent to their Christian vocation, for whom the Church is nothing more than a juridical society, bound by the walls of the building.<sup>187</sup>

The highly idealistic vision of increasing social visibility became a utopian dream sustained within the Church. In daily life, steps taken towards resolving the circumstances for ecclesial life in the revolution were smaller and more gradual. For most of the late 1960s, local communities struggled to keep their temples open and laypeople engaged.

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183 A pesar de las dificultades inherentes a esta determinación, no es una responsabilidad de la que podamos sentirnos exentos. Muy por el contrario, por las especiales circunstancias de nuestro medio ambiente social, los cubanos podemos aportar en este campo una experiencia que resulte útil y enriquecedora para la Iglesia en general. AHAH AC JD La Habana Proyecto de la comisión para el plan de trabajo de la Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana, *sin fecha*; AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 4.7.1965.

184 Pedraza 2007, 118–120.

185 Con nuestros hermanos separados, con los no religiosos, etc. - - con un “espíritu genuinamente cristiano misionero – proyección del sentido de caridad o amor al prójimo en la promoción del bien común (encarloarlo en la vida diaria).” AHAH AC JD La Habana Proyecto de la comisión para el plan de trabajo de la Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana. *Sin fecha*.

186 No puede estar separada de la referencia directa al mundo social exterior, material y circindante. AHAH AC JF CN Formación J.F.A.C.C. Consejo Nacional, Secretariado de Formación: Guía para la preparación de socias y grupos provinciales 1965.

187 Se sale del templo y llega allí, a los hogares, a los centros de diversiones, de estudio, de trabajo, a todos los lugares donde viven hombres y mujeres, que quizás un día recibieron el Bautismo y ahora permanecen indiferentes a su vocación cristiana, y para los cuales la Iglesia no es más que una sociedad jurídica, limitada por las paredes del templo. AHAH AC JF CN Formación J.F.A.C.C. Consejo Nacional, Secretariado de Formación: Guía para la preparación de socias y grupos provinciales 1965.

Yet in the summer of 1965, lay leaders also reported increasing contact with non-militant laypeople in parishes, and they set out to place more attention on recreational activities, such as excursions, matinees, and games, as a manner in which the Church could be present in the daily life of Cubans.<sup>188</sup> Joint activities were approached as a method to reinforce the sense of belonging to a community of Catholics. Through them, the nature of individual encounters between Catholics and non-Catholics in the revolution was also discussed, contested, and defined. Personal encounter and the missionary nature of interpersonal relations in everyday life were employed for understanding the loose commitment of Cuban youth to religion.

To attract adults, local communities placed a focus on prayer, internal reflection, and quotidian spirituality both individually and through life in communities. Central to sustaining a sense of living as Catholic communities in the revolution was fostering communitarian spirit. Highlighting the role of local communities as the base units of spirituality and religious practices became essential in such maintenance work.<sup>189</sup> Focus on grassroots spirituality also allowed individuals to weave their own experiences into the grand course of ecclesial life. By emphasizing personal faith and private commitment in lieu of public performance, the Church attempted to alleviate confrontations in lay participation given the pressure for revolutionary commitment.

#### 4. Camarioca and the Collapse of Reality

In the history of migration from Cuba to the United States, a chaotic period was witnessed in the fall of 1965 at the port of Camarioca in Cuba. Responding to U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson's new policy of welcoming refugees from communism, in October hundreds of boats arrived in Camarioca from Miami: they were piloted by Cubans from the United States with the purpose of picking up thousands of family members and relatives from the island. What followed from the boatlift was the joint policy of Cuba and the United States, an orderly refugee movement that over the course of the next eight years allowed 260,000 Cubans to arrive in the United States by air. They were processed through the Cuban Refugee Program specifically established to receive Cubans through an open-door policy.<sup>190</sup>

The Church as well witnessed the repercussions of the massive exodus. In October 1965, the correspondence<sup>191</sup> between Catholic Action's lay leaders in Havana, Camagüey, Matanzas, Pinar del Río, and Santiago de Cuba focused on the acute crisis of the Camarioca boatlift and its implications for ecclesial life on the island.<sup>192</sup> According to Emilio Roca Notó of Santiago de Cuba, some of the diocese's clergy found themselves "indecisive and down" as a consequence of a speech by Fidel Castro declaring the boatlift an acute and recognized state of affairs. According to Roca Notó:

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188 AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín No 6, Mayo 1965.

189 AHAH AC JD La Habana Proyecto de la comisión para el plan de trabajo de la Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana, *sin fecha*; AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 4.7.1965; AHAH AC JF CN Formación J.F.A.C.C. Consejo Nacional, Secretariado de Formación: Guía para la preparación de socias y grupos provinciales 1965.

190 Pedraza 2007, 4–5, 120–121; Ziegler 2007, 42–43; Uria 2011, 533–534.

191 See Appendix 3, picture 3.

192 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Teresa de Rojas 22.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Teresa de Rojas 22.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Carlota Vidaud 25.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to C. P. 25.10.1965.

... [The speech] has caused such a massive stir that not even a cat will stay. It's sad to see how singular words can provoke the collapse of everything, the destruction of the very fatherland; what hope is there left if everyone leaves? - - And now let me tell you, I don't even want to think about it, I only ask of God to guide us in fulfilling what he lays out for us.<sup>193</sup>

The announcement and ensuing boatlift of approximately 5,000 Cubans were unexpected, representing the first occasion in which the government had allowed Cubans to leave the country. The chaotically orchestrated boatlift came to an end after two months of operation due to the dangers posed to human life by sea exile on small, private boats. The exodus was transformed into the so-called Freedom Flights: a mutual agreement between Cuba and the United States allowing for Cubans to depart from the island to the United States on the twice-daily, five-days-a-week flights starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1965.<sup>194</sup>

The dialogue of Cuba's lay Catholic leaders echoed the surprise and confusion following the rapid and massive exodus of their fellow countrymen—and also their Catholic peers in the Church. The letters also reveal the scope of the episode as a nationwide crisis, “the common story of Camarioca,” as described by Gómez Treto. In reference to the emotional confusion caused by the boatlift, and its repercussions for a sense of stability, Gómez Treto called the episode “a sorrow for all,” one shared by Cubans all over the island while also painstakingly experienced as the individual histories of families and communities.

The repercussions of the boatlift created an atmosphere of uncertainty and defeat among the laity of Santiago de Cuba and Camagüey.<sup>195</sup> Immersed in the course of events and affected by members of the community making decisions to either leave or stay, laypeople in Havana, Santiago, and Camagüey were reminded by the Camarioca boatlift that the spheres of their lives as Catholics were inextricably intertwined in the revolution. In his letters, Roca Notó suggested that the developments taking place in ecclesial life, particularly for and by the laity, might come to a halt in Santiago de Cuba, at least until the anxiety caused by the boatlift came to an end.<sup>196</sup> Implicitly expressed in the correspondence was also a mounting concern for decaying ecclesial participation as a result of the exodus. Quoting Felix Varela, the remarkable 19<sup>th</sup> century Cuban independence leader and Catholic priest, Gómez Treto affirmed that “we must continue to construct our altar with the ruins of what was demolished ... and with something more.” Referring to divine providence, Gómez Treto concluded: “This ‘something more’ is the ‘extra’ which we don't have to think about too much for now, but later.”<sup>197</sup>

As Roca Notó implied, for Catholic communities it was not only the marginalizing effect of revolutionary policies that caused worry, nor was it just the distance between loyal revolutionaries and Catholics on the island; it was also the exodus of Catholics from Cuba to the United States and the internal tensions within the Church caused by their departure. In a

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193 La causa principal fue el discurso del Comandante del Jefe, que aquí ha causado un revuelo tan grande que no se queda ni el gato. Es triste ver como unas palabras pueden provocar el desplomo de todo, la destrucción de la misma patria, ¿qué esperanza queda si todos van? - - Ahora esto te digo que no quiero ni pensar y solo le pido a Dios que nos ilumine para que hacer lo que el disponga. AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 11.10.1965.

194 Pedraza 2007, 120–121; Ziegler 2007, 42–43; Uriá 2011, 533–534.

195 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Carlota Vidaud 29.11.1965.

196 AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 11.10.1965.

197 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Teresa de Rojas 22.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Carlota Vidaud 25.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to C. P. 25.10.1965.

manner similar to the Cuban government criticizing those leaving of treason against the revolution and fatherland, voices within the Church criticized the migration as an unchristian solution to hardship. Yet lay leaders also expressed sympathy for those leaving home. In the unprecedented course of events in October 1965, Gómez Treto, as the president of Catholic Action, wrote to both Roca Notó and Vidaud that it was imperative for them to refrain as Catholics from making judgments about those who opted for migration:

In the end, we have to agree that this is a matter of conscience for each one, and in no case should we dream of reaping what we haven't sown. We will not talk sense into those who have lost their minds; let us pray for them. -- And of course: let us not judge nor be judged (Mt. 7,1), for each one only knows where their own shoe treads.<sup>198</sup>

Gómez Treto also assured Santiago's lay leaders that in such a time of uncertainty, a Christian mindset of serenity was needed to cultivate patience and perspectives of hope. Gómez Treto suggested that the loss of members of the community should be entrusted to divine providence: "God constructs his church with 'living stones': we pray his mercy for those who do not want to be or cannot be those [stones], and that others will take their place."<sup>199</sup> This, almost deterministic view of the Church echoed the idea of the Church as a simultaneously transcendent entity not limited by temporary or situational contexts; as the correspondence suggested, lay leaders sought solace in the belief that the Church would continue to exist, even though the human resources might diminish in number.

The crisis of Camarioca coincided with the hopeful aspirations for a new spring of the global Catholic Church: while Cuban Catholics were leaving the island, the final session of the Second Vatican Council at the Vatican was opened in September and closed in December. In the correspondence between Gómez Treto and other lay leaders on the island, the Camarioca boatlift was the first event fracturing the carefully maintained façade of optimistic prospects and trust in the Church as a supernatural, sacramental presence in the revolution. Similarly, Camarioca reflected the paradoxes embedded in the aspirations of the Cuban laity in post-conciliar Cuban ecclesial life. While the lay leaders portrayed themselves and the organizations they represented as active and productive units of civil society, membership and participation in their groups had declined dramatically. Laypeople publicly invested in the development of the Church were few; the great majority of parishioners had distanced themselves from daily participation. Many Catholics had either integrated themselves with the revolution or left the island. As suggested by subtle hints in tone, chosen words, theological references, and existential remarks in the correspondence, the architects of renewal were realists: they acknowledged the dire circumstances of the Church in the margins of the revolutionary reality and the lack of resources weighing the Church down.

Whereas Catholics had five years earlier considered the revolution as a temporary matter, in 1965 they no longer saw an end to the process in the aftermath of the Camarioca episode.

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198 En definitiva hemos de convenir en que resulta un asunto de conciencia para cada cual y en ningún caso hemos de sonar con recoger lo que no hemos sembrado. No vamos a discutir razones con quienes hayan perdido en juicio: recemos por ellos. -- Y por supuesto: no juzguemos y no seremos juzgados (Mt. 7,1) que solo cada cual sabe dónde le aprieta zapato. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 22.10.1965.

199 Dios construye su Iglesia con "piedras vivas"; roguemos a su misericordia por quienes no quieran o no puedan ser de éstas, que ya otras aparecerán en su lugar. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 22.10.1965.



Measures taken by the ecclesial hierarchy in anticipation of the normalization of the political and social order had been, one by one, proven unhelpful. The decision of the episcopate to refrain from offering public criticism or publishing materials had resulted in the disappearance of the normative voices within the Church. Correspondingly, the consolidation of the revolution had thus led the Church to estimate and reflect on its own consolidation within the revolution. The Church no longer seemed to possess a role from which it could engage in civic activities and discourse on the course of the revolution like it had had in the first years of Castro's rule. Ideal citizenry was defined by participation and mass support for the revolution, and the Catholic Church was perceived as an alien, disloyal institution in the margins of revolutionary society. In public imagery, Catholicism and revolutionary ideology were no longer overlapping categories, and individuals had chosen between the two either voluntarily or by necessity.

During the Camarioca boatlift, the sense of changing times was an ever-present factor. "History only serves us as experience. It should only be consulted like a textbook for studies, but never should the past be applied to the present moment," wrote Roca Notó in his letter to Gómez Treto.<sup>200</sup> A particular point of reference for Roca Notó was a passage in the New Testament emphasizing the current day's issues instead of harboring worry about the distant future.<sup>201</sup> He suggested that lessons could be learned from the past through the interpretative perspectives of faith: "It would be good to analyze the history produced by Camarioca in the light of the Gospel."<sup>202</sup> This suggests an interpretation of the Camarioca experience as a turning point in understanding Cuban history, a point of irreversible change in the course of the revolution. At the same time, it provides a window into how religious meaning-making was employed to forming a cohesive, comprehensive history of the revolution.

The experience of Gómez Treto and Roca Notó ultimately reflects what Orsi proposes as the dissolution of reality: a circumstance of "great urgency, distress, anxiety, and pain" by which "the taken-for-granted quality of reality is dissolved and humans encounter the fictive nature of what they call real, in the sense that they apprehend the radical contingency of their worlds." As further suggested by Orsi, such moments often provoke "new uses of religious ritual, story, and metaphor, and new configurations of the real."<sup>203</sup> On a grander scale, this was the experience of Catholics in the revolution: the overturning of all life as it had been known, and the simultaneous struggle to maintain a sense of normalcy, ultimately and inevitably leading to a sense of disappearing landscapes and the assimilation of new religious thinking and action.

The dialogue between Gómez Treto and Roca Notó reveals that the Camarioca experience served as a marker in the shift in historical continuity for the Church as well. In light of the mass exodus, the traditional role of Catholic Action in Cuba no longer served as a linear reference point to the future. What lay ahead for the Church could not be predicted by understanding the past. Furthermore, in the eyes of the Church, what was ensuing in Cuba in the mid-1960s was not a result that could be directly reduced to a sum of the linear course of

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200 La historia solo sirve para coger experiencia y solo debe ser consultado como libro de texto para su estudio, pero nunca para aplicar lo pasado al momento actual. AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 14.9.1965.

201 AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 14.9.1965.

202 Sería bueno que analizaremos a historia que lo de Camarioca ha producido, a la luz del Evangelio (por ej. Mt.6, 33–34). AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 14.9.1965.

203 Orsi 2003, 173.

historical events: the present seemed to consist of sporadic moments, and the past was an episodic collection of events not connected to each other by logic. This experience concurs with the broader conceptualization of the revolution as a process differing via its complexity in terms of both continuity and change. As argued by de la Fuente, the processes of the revolution “cannot be comprehended in a linear logic of changes and continuities, as they occur in overlapping but disjointed scenarios and time lines.”<sup>204</sup>

As the discussion suggests, when attempting to maintain a sense of hope and purpose, the collapsing linearity of the past and unclear prospects of the future paved the way for an emphasis on the here and now. “We, here and in other dioceses, try to continue ‘searching for the Kingdom and its justice’ without worrying about tomorrow, convinced that we will receive in excess what we lack,” Gómez Treto reassured Carlota Vidaud.<sup>205</sup> Hope belonged to the future, being also immaterial and otherworldly, as was emphasized by the themes constantly present in lay leaders’ correspondence: Christian faith in life after death, resurrection, and the full union of God and believers after the worldly struggle had ended.

As the past could not serve as a reference point and the future had suddenly become an unimaginable prospect not emerging from any logical conclusions drawn from experience, the only tangible reality was the present. Despite the rapid changes in the way the revolutionary process was experienced, life was lived in the here and now of Cuba, as was also acknowledged by the lay leaders: despite the sense of divine providence in the Church’s history, more immediate issues required attention from laypeople and clergy alike. With the growing number of Cubans leaving the island, those staying and still publicly committed to religion assumed more responsibilities in their daily engagement with the Church. “Pray for the tasks at hand. Pray that the fruits of the work would not be something that pass but remain,” wrote Gómez Treto.<sup>206</sup> Further reflecting Orsi’s perspective on lived religion, the meanings given to the Camarioca experience provide a powerful example of the dissolving religious reality of Cuban Catholics in the revolution. Triggered by the deep emotional disturbance and sense of the changing course of history, Camarioca became a collision point between religious and revolutionary worlds. Such intersections, as argued by Orsi, make visible “the explosive consequences for people, families, and political worlds at the juncture of intimate experience with political and social realities.”<sup>207</sup>

In the revolution of young men, Catholic laymen had been the first to leave the Church. In 1965, the exodus of men caused particular worry and led Catholic Action to issue an urgent warning: if Catholic men previously well-integrated into religious associations and social participation as Catholics could not find a renewed sense of Catholic spirituality, better media for participation, or a way to remain committed as educated members of the laity, they would disappear beyond return.<sup>208</sup> This relayed a larger cultural pattern of the revolution: while the process had created an all-encompassing overturning of public and private lives for all Cubans,

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204 de la Fuente 2019, 291.

205 Nosotros, aquí y en las demás diócesis, tratamos de seguir “buscando el Reino y su Justicia” sin inquietarnos por el mañana seguros de que lo que nos falte lo recibiremos por añadidura. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Carlota Vidaud 25.10.1965.

206 Pida por las misiones. Interceda para que el fruto de ellas no sea algo pasajero, sino que permanezca. AHAH AC JN Cooperadoras diocesanas to Raúl Gómez Treto 12/1965.

207 Orsi 2003, 173.

208 AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 14.9.1965.

it had also fostered a particularly masculine culture, as discussed by Sierra Madero, among others.<sup>209</sup> In the revolution of young men, ideal masculinity, and *machismo*, revolutionary culture both appealed to and expected the visible participation of men in its mass organizations, institutions of power, and public portrayals of militant support. In this world, religiosity was not a desirable attribute of masculinity, which led men to further distance themselves from the religious sphere.

The concern over Catholic men and their affiliation with the Church related to a deeper social division in the revolution. In the polarized atmosphere, individual social relations from Church to society had become increasingly difficult to sustain. According to interviewees, the division of Catholic and revolutionary Cubans affected individual lives on a daily basis. Examples recounted particularly often had to do with the marriages of young adults: both archival sources and oral histories refer to young Catholic adults forming relationships with other Catholics with an emphasis on shared Catholic values of marriage and family as a counterforce to those promoted by the revolution.<sup>210</sup>

Particularly controversial for the Church, State, communities, and families were the marriages between militant Catholics and revolutionaries. Reflecting such social polarization were the cases of young Cubans from Catholic families dating militant communists and the rejection of Catholic girlfriends and boyfriends by families and peers committed to the revolution. Similarly dividing episodes included the celebrations of Catholic marriages, with either militant communists or Catholics refusing to partake in them with the other party present and launching investigations into the ideological foundations of their peers' prospective partners.<sup>211</sup>

These encounters both made visible the rift within Cuban society and opened a window into Catholic lives embedded in the revolution. While ecclesial authorities urged the communities to engage in missionary exchange with the "others" on a grassroots level, the effort was not successful because State policy only allowed the Church marginal space and visibility. Missionary motives turned inwards, and the Church focused strongly on providing for those already committed to the community. At the same time, the liturgical reform initiated by Vatican II began to arrive in Cuba and found resonance in the Church, stripped as it was of social participation, yet increasingly focused on fostering a more concentrated sense of a community in its spiritual domain.

## 5. The Presence of Witness

As the life of Catholic communities was increasingly turning inwards, the struggle to maintain a sense of purpose in the daily revolutionary reality was an ever-present challenge. To this end, a strong emphasis on the internal life and identity of Catholics through spirituality emerged as a primary expression of faith in the late 1960s. In both archival sources and interviews, this dimension of leading a Catholic life in the everyday of the revolutionary reality was often described through the concept of *testimonio*.

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209 See Sierra Madero 2016.

210 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto 20.11.1965; AHAH AC JN Queridos hermanos Chacito y Magali 20.11.1965; Interview 28.

211 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto 20.11.1965; Interview 28.

In scholarly discourse, *testimonio* refers most often either to the Latin American concept of testimonies in political or social contexts or to a genre of testimonial literature, whose origins can also be traced to the experiences of political and social injustice in Latin America.<sup>212</sup> In studies on revolutionary Cuba, scholarly discussion of *testimonio* has often been limited to conceptualizing testimony as a literacy genre in the revolution, one consisting mainly of autobiographical works.<sup>213</sup> According to Hamilton, “*testimonio* is an explicitly political form of literature in which the eyewitness recounts her or his life as a part of a collective memory that offers a counter-narrative to official histories.”<sup>214</sup> The religious and spiritual connotations of the concept in Cuba have neither been acknowledged nor critically analyzed. Yet a rich array of both archival sources and oral histories point towards a distinctively Cuban Catholic understanding of the foundations and use of *testimonio* as a concept mapping the life of Catholics in the revolution from the 1960s onwards. Very little scholarly work has been conducted on the Catholic concept of testimony in revolutionary Cuba, although it seems to belong to the essential vocabulary of Cuban Catholics for describing their experience in the revolution.

In both individual and collective histories of Cuban Catholics, *testimonio* surfaces repeatedly as both a concept and an act. In these accounts, apart from the distinctively Latin American and political definition of *testimonio*, the concept has also deeply rooted origins in Christian tradition. For this study, *testimonio* carries a dualistic meaning. While it is connected with Christian witness as a theological concept, testimony as a category of historical knowledge is defined as a first-hand account of historical events in the scholarly study of history, such as the oral histories presented in this study.<sup>215</sup> In Cuba, *testimonio* as a Catholic concept was frequently used in reference to both testimony and witnessing; the former usually alluded to the social experience of Catholics in the revolution and the latter to the ecclesial vision of Christian witness.

Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, published in 1964, had offered the Cuban Church a theological framework for testimony in its discourse on atheistic communism, again voicing the Church’s strict rejection of it while also promoting further dialogue between the opposing worldviews. Furthermore, the letter had discussed the oppression of Catholics by claiming it was communism and its followers “who are clearly repudiating us, and for doctrinaire reasons subjecting us to violent oppression,” and thus it rejected Marxist teaching.<sup>216</sup> The

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212 Ching, Buckley & Lozano-Alonso 2007, 318.

213 See Carlos Velazco: *Cinco recuerdos del porvenir* (2019); Casavantes Bradford discusses the *testimonios* of *Grupo Areíto* regarding Cuban exile experiences in the United States; Sierra Madero’s work connects *testimonio* to the discourse about UMAP in Cuban historiography. See Sierra Madero 2016; Casavantes Bradford 2016. See also Chomsky 1994.

214 Hamilton 2012, 9. For a discussion on *testimonio* as a concept linking with oral history in Cuba, Catholic interpretation excluded, see Hamilton 2012.

215 Testimonies can be used as representations of recollection and remembrance. As such, they may become tools for writing history, particularly among the contemporaries and witnesses of historical events and periods. These histories are often considered marginal, alternative, or in a minority position of either power, representation, or status. Testimonies may be written or oral accounts of the past, but they are testimonies narrated from the present. They often make use of collective experiences and accounts of the past, drawing on collective memory and becoming a part of it. Simultaneously, testimonies may also be used in building collective accounts of the past, drawing on experiences shared by the group, although most often narrated by individuals in their testimonies. See Nance 2006; Lackey & Sosa 2010.

216 *Ecclesiam Suam* 6.8.1964; Fejérdy 2016, 110-112.

Cuban Church had found resonance with the Pope's affirmation that instead of dialogue with the oppressor, "the only witness that the Church can give is that of silence, suffering, patience, and unfailing love, and this is a voice that not even death can silence."<sup>217</sup> Although Pope Paul VI also encouraged continued dialogue with communist regimes,<sup>218</sup> it was not considered possible in Cuba at the time, as only the frameworks of silent testimony seemed to resonate with the Cuban experience. The discourse on *testimonio* thus shows how the Holy See's vision of diplomacy in communist countries and the Cuban interpretation of *Ostpolitik* never fully met in the 1960s.

In 1965, with a direct reference to Vatican II, Father Alfredo Petit Vergel called on "each layperson to bear witness in this world of the resurrection and life of Our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>219</sup> As both Cuban archival sources and scholarly work on Vatican II discuss, the call to witness also linked the Cuban Church to both a conciliar understanding of the role of the Church in the modern world and to the recognition of the laity's role globally.<sup>220</sup> Witnessing to Christ was understood as a task bestowed upon both the clergy and religious orders as well as the laity as part of the Church's universal mission:

Now more than ever, in the supernatural light of the ecumenical council that ended its sessions, we in the laity feel united in the apostolic spirit, into which we have been called by our Holy Mother the Church. This is why, while celebrating Christmas, we must contribute with our prayer and testimony of unity to presenting Christ to the world. Let us unite in service and in action, so that we might bring into practice in joyful dynamics and brotherly adhesion the decisions emanating from the council.<sup>221</sup>

Further connecting these global currents to Cuba, female leaders of Havana's laity wrote: "Today, the Church in the council revises its stance on the laity and intends to move it towards life of active witness."<sup>222</sup> As the excerpt suggests, witness as a religious concept both connected the Catholic community to the universal Church and distinguished it from global Catholicism by an emphasis on the context in which the distinctive Cuban vision of Christian witness grew. As a Cuban Catholic concept, *testimonio* referred specifically to the life of the Church in the margins, and therefore it dates to the years following the revolutionary policies that aimed at marginalizing the Church through a lack of resources and civic visibility. As a result of these activities and manifestations of perseverance, the Church began to employ the concept of testimony to describe its *modus operandi*. Archival sources show that *testimonio* as an act was employed in reference to both periods of hardship and processes of recovery from it in the latter half of the 1960s.

217 *Ecclesiam Suam* 6.8.1964; VC Actualidad Católica 4.10.1964; VC Actualidad Católica 11.10.1964.

218 Fejérdy 2016, 112.

219 AHAH AC JD La Habana Querido Hermano en el Sacerdocio by Alfredo Petit Vergel, *sin fecha*.

220 For instance, AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Teresa de Rojas 30.9.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 30.9.1965; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Carlota Vidaud 7.10.1965; Alberigo 1995, 42.

221 Hoy más que nunca, a la luz sobrenatural del Concilio Ecuménico que acaba de terminar sus sesiones, los laicos nos sentimos unidos en el espíritu apostólico, al cual hemos sido llamados por nuestra Santa Madre la Iglesia. Por ello, aprovechando estas Navidades debemos contribuir con nuestra oración y testimonio de unidad a presentar ante el mundo a Cristo --. Unámonos pues, en la plegaria y en la acción, a fin de que podamos llevar a la práctica con gozoso dinamismo y filial adhesión las decisiones emanadas del Concilio. AHAH AC JN Junta Diocesana de Acción Católica to Curas Párrocos, Rectores de Iglesias, Ramas de Acción Católica, Asociaciones del Apostolado Seglar, Navidad 1965.

222 AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín: Iglesia.

#### IV TESTIMONY OF LIFE: 1962–1968

As a concept constantly repeated in the interviews, *testimonio* paradoxically referred to both silent endurance and public profession of Catholic faith. The concept of *testimonio* appeared in discourses reminiscing about the first decades of the revolution, after the marginalization of the Church in the revolutionary society and the first experiences of living in the margins as Catholics.<sup>223</sup> The interviewees most commonly made reference to such testimonies as the “testimony of everyday life”<sup>224</sup> and “silent testimony.”<sup>225</sup> Members of the ecclesial hierarchy, the clergy, religious orders, and the laity alike mention the era of the late 1960s as a time of “giving a testimony in silence.”<sup>226</sup> These silent testimonies consisted of not only conducting testimonial acts, but also of being a testimony in one’s personality and life.

*Being a testimony* was equal to a testimony of faith and spirituality through everyday life and experience. One oral history summarized the testimony of presence by highlighting “the importance of being witnesses; that one has to be present in every place”;<sup>227</sup> it entailed a sense of being present and representing Catholicism and the Church through more than actions alone. That, in turn, problematized the very understanding of *testimonio*: while it was seen as silence, it did not amount to absence. This conceptual distinction has not always been acknowledged in scholarly work, and the historiographical knowledge produced by the revolution has treated them synonymously.

Both documental and oral sources suggest that testimonies were sometimes considered personal characteristics of being Catholic, like in the case of Pérez Serantes, the archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, who others described as the “enormous living testimony of wisdom and love, that is the archbishop”<sup>228</sup> and a “living and humble testimony of love and divine kindness.”<sup>229</sup> In this sense, characteristic testimonies were also signs of resistance and endurance. In an individual’s life, testimony corresponded to “a transcendent understanding of life and its missionary work.”<sup>230</sup> Testimony was expected from laity as a sign of commitment to the community as both a collective act and a feature of communitarian life. The testimony of everyday life was fulfilled in local communities, through active participation and public manifestations of faith. As such, testimonies also built cohesion in communities and served to reinforce the collective identity of local communities through everyday expressions of commitment and loyalty. On a global scale, Cuban Catholics saw their personal and collective testimonies embedded in the universal church, which consisted of both present and past generations of believers bearing witness to a transcendent presence in human lives.<sup>231</sup>

The understanding of *testimonio* as a collective framework of spirituality transformed its

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223 For instance, Interview 2; Interview 5; Interview 7.

224 Testimonio de la vida cotidiana. Interview 12.

225 Testimonio del silencio. Interview 3.

226 Dando un testimonio en silencio. Interview 2.

227 La importancia de ser testigos, qua había que estar presente en todos lugares. Interview 14.

228 Ese enorme testimonio vivo de la Sabiduría y el Amor, que es el Arzobispo. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 13.12.1965.

229 Testimonio vivo y sensible del amor y la bondad divina. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Enrique Pérez Serantes 25.11.1965.

230 La visión sobrenatural de su vida y su acción evangelizadora. AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín No 5. Enero 1965 Plan de Trabajo para 1965.

231 AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín No 5. Enero 1965 Plan de Trabajo para 1965; AHAH AC JD La Habana Proyecto de la comisión para el plan de trabajo de la Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana; AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín: Iglesia; AHAH AC JN Memorandum 3.10.1965.

nature also towards that of witnessing. For the Cuban Church, Christian witness was a manifestation of the missionary spirit within the restrictive frameworks of the revolution. Ultimately, it was an act translated from the internal to the external, directed from the Church outwards. Cuban laity were encouraged to “give a testimony” as witnesses of faith and Christian life not only for the Church but for Cuban society in general, for Cubans outside the Church, and inevitably, for the outside world on the nature of Catholicism in Cuba. Catholics in Cuba could not witness in isolation, for “the world of today is anxious for unity in every way: in international agreements, regional groups, in the fight for demolishing inequality of peoples, races and social classes; therefore the world expects from us Christians a collective witness.”<sup>232</sup>

Correspondingly, *testimonio* in the Cuban context served to reinforce narratives of perseverance, resistance, and ultimately, remembrance of the Church in the revolutionary reality. These testimonies were recognized and treated as testimonies by the community itself, and in this manner, the idea of *testimonio* in fact resonated with the definition provided by Hamilton. Serving as first-person accounts of the past, testimonies also brought forth the elements of lived religion, everyday experiences, and grassroots religiosity that do not place focus solely on the Church as an institution, but also as a living organism comprising individuals leading lives in which faith, religiosity, and spirituality are embedded as small traces, quotidian acts, sets of values, morals, and ideals in dialogical relation with each other.

As such, everyday testimonies responded to the challenge of evangelizing in post-Vatican II Catholicism. Ultimately, testimony was considered a duty of Catholics as a sign of God’s work and Christ in the world. According to the study materials, a Christian should, through their testimony, “make Christ present in their little world.” In this manner, a Cuban believer was “a testimony of Christ.”<sup>233</sup> In individual lives, it was instrumental to “give an authentic testimony,” “a testimony with a true sense of charity.”<sup>234</sup> This testimony of love, “alive and convincing,” was to turn the eyes of the surrounding society to the Church, looking “at them and the love they embody.”<sup>235</sup> This understanding of testimony as simultaneously private and shared, intimate and public, resonated with both the universal Catholic Church and individual Catholics. In Cuba, it also allowed believers space for religious meaning-making, for their personal histories, life trajectories, and emotional experiences in the revolutionary reality.

When testimonies were constructed within Catholic communities as symbols of the continuity and presence of the Church, laypeople were appointed to carry out a particular role of transferring and transforming religiosity through individual lives and personal stories.<sup>236</sup>

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232 El mundo de hoy está ansioso de unidad en todos los medios: acuerdos internacionales, agrupaciones regionales, lucha por la disminución de diferencias entre todos los hombres, razas y clases sociales; y por lo tanto lo que este mundo exige de nosotros los cristianos es un testimonio comunitario. AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín No 7. Septiembre 1965.

233 AHAH AC JF La Habana El Equipo Apostólico.

234 AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín No 5. Enero 1965 Plan de Trabajo para 1965; AHAH AC JF CN Formación J.F.A.C.C. Consejo Nacional, Secretariado de Formación: Guía para la preparación de socias y grupos provinciales 1965.

235 AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín: Iglesia.

236 The Catholic concept of *testimonio* and its use within the ecclesial community in Cuba can also be contested from within. As testimonies are not universal but rather individual, their nature in the construction of narratives and normativity raises critical questions. Which testimony corresponds with the interpretation shared with others – or does any? What are the boundaries of collectively accepted and reinforced testimonies, and are there particular

Through the presence of Catholics, testimony also carried a missionary dimension: it was a task appointed to the Church by Christ. This brought forth the transcendent dimension of testimony and witnessing as Christians, while also highlighting the strength of the community and its cohesion arising from unanimous testimony.<sup>237</sup> “[The community] cannot be a closed community,” emphasized the lay leaders, directing the concept of *testimonio* towards a more communitarian interpretation.<sup>238</sup>

Both *testimonio* and witness were also responsibilities of the laity. Just as Cuban revolutionaries were asked to continuously manifest their faith in and commitment to the revolution, through testimony in their personal life Catholics were to offer a solemn, unceasing presence of a contesting social reality. *Testimonio* was reinforced as a task bestowed upon all generations of Cuban Catholics: even teenagers were taught the meaning and expectation of testimony in their Catholic education.<sup>239</sup> For Catholic youth, personal commitment to the Christian faith was presented as a prerequisite for a “living and convincing” testimony: “It is impossible to offer an authentic testimony that prevails, most importantly, in the face of obstacles, if one does not have a close, living friendship with Christ.”<sup>240</sup> Also, laywomen were led to ask themselves, “Am I able to give to my sisters and brothers, with my testimony, a well-covering and enthusiastic vision of the Church?”<sup>241</sup> These examples suggest that witnessing was also an unconditional requirement for lay participation. “Timid, mediocre Christians” not offering a living testimony of Christ and a Christian lifestyle within the revolutionary reality were considered complacent in their state of disgrace.<sup>242</sup> Gómez Treto further proposed that for some, witnessing was transformed into a “readiness to avoid taking part in the revolution by not participating in social organizations and mass undertakings,” also accepting the consequences of resistance.<sup>243</sup>

The lay leaders of the women’s Catholic Action group reminded their members of the duty of all militants to “give a Christian testimony all of the time and in all places, not only with one’s attitude but also with her presence and personal attire (for example, on the beach).”<sup>244</sup> In this manner, visible signals of loyalty to the Church were required even in the most quotidian of revolutionary circumstances. Additionally, numerous examples suggest that witnessing was treated as a spiritual act in daily life. For instance, in 1965 young female adults in Catholic communities in Havana were offered an example of witnessing through imitating the Virgin Mary in the virtues of her life. At the same time, they were asked to engage in a critical revision of their lifestyles as young women, and to exchange experiences with their peers also on

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non-topics for testimonies? How have the testimonies evolved in the revolutionary period, and how have they shaped the community’s perception and interpretation of itself?

237 AHAH AC JF La Habana El Equipo Apostólico; AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín: Iglesia; AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín No 5. Enero 1965 Plan de Trabajo para 1965.

238 AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín: Iglesia.

239 AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín: Iglesia.

240 Ofrezca un testimonio viviente y convencido - - es imposible dar un testimonio auténtico y sobre todo permanecer con esa ilusión frente a los obstáculos, si no se tiene una amistad entrañable y viva con Cristo. AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín No 6 Mayo 1965.

241 Procuro con mi testimonio, dar a mis hermanos una visión amplia y entusiasta de la Iglesia? AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín Trimestral: Cuestionario Octubre-Noviembre-Diciembre 1965.

242 Los cristianos tibios y mediocres. AHAH AC JF La Habana Conclusiones de la reunión interdiocesana 26.9.1965.

243 Gómez Treto 1988, 61.

244 AHAH AC JF LA Habana Boletín No 6. Mayo 1965.



personal, private matters. This was transformed into acts of witnessing, as the women were then encouraged to invite their families and friends to engage in practices of devotion and prayer.<sup>245</sup>

As the multilayered meanings of Catholic testimony and witnessing in the revolutionary reality suggest, *testimonio* was a concept generating space for discourse on the island: witness-in-being came to mark the self-identification of Catholics in a context they perceived as hostile.<sup>246</sup> As such, testimony served as a voice of otherness within the revolution, portraying the Church and Cuban Catholics as a counterforce to the daily performance of the revolution. To non-Catholic Cubans and Cubans committed to the revolution, *testimonio* provided an example of resistance and alternative values. By representing a contesting form of identification in an environment framed by the requirement of mass support and popular unity, the lifestyle of *testimonio* also became linked with compliance to and rejection of the supposed moral codes provided by the revolution and their self-generative, peer-supervised enforcement among Cubans.

As an overarching definition, archival sources produced by the committed members of Catholic Action defined *testimonio* as a way of life. Witnessing as a Christian duty transformed into its own code of conduct:

To always act like Christ Our Lord would, in order to show with our own lives that we believe in him. This witness may sometimes be of words, others of example or acts; a great tool to help us revise our apostolic life, reflect on it and improve it.<sup>247</sup>

Testimony and witnessing also connected the Cuban Church to its sense of brokenness. The interconnected nature of testimony, witnessing, and brokenness with respect to the Church are discussed by Orsi in the framework of lived religion. Orsi suggests that a witness of brokenness is essentially manifested through presence; it in fact appoints for religion a role in creating scar tissue through which brokenness may be approached and reconciled.<sup>248</sup> In Cuba, the everyday understanding of testimony was a constant reminder of such brokenness; it was a reminder of the painful half-life as a Church, witnessing to its brokenness through an unfulfilled presence and participation in revolutionary society. At the same time, it was an attempt to put together pieces of ecclesial life and religious expression and achieve a sense of cohesion for the Cuban Church in its extraordinary circumstances.

*Testimonio* also offered the Cuban Church a mirror to Vatican II and the agency of laity in the life of the Church. Paradoxically, the renewed focus on the laity ultimately led to the dissolving of institutional lay structures. Among the most concrete outcomes of the process was the dissolution of Catholic Action and its transformation into the Apostolate of the Laity in the organization's national assembly, held in Cienfuegos in 1967. The decision marked a conscious effort to defuse the militant organization and create new, more flexible and less politicized

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245 AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín No 6 Mayo 1965; AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín Trimestral: Cuestionario Octubre-Noviembre-Diciembre 1965.

246 AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín: Iglesia.

247 Actuar siempre como Cristo Nuestro Señor lo haría, para demostrar con la vida propia que creemos en El. Este testimonio será unas veces de palabra, otras de ejemplo, otras de actuación, y en una revisión sobre los hechos de nuestra vida apostólica un gran medio para observarlo y mejorarlo. AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín: Para los consejos.

248 Orsi 2003, 173; Orsi 2016, 108.

channels for lay participation.<sup>249</sup> As was later explained by Gómez Treto, the new structure allowed laypeople “more community-oriented organization, which was integrated into the church’s overall pastoral work.”<sup>250</sup>

As proposed by both the archival sources of Catholic Action in Havana and Ignacio Uría’s research, the dissolution caused some of the laity to lose their sense of attachment with the Church: the organizational frameworks of Catholic Action had provided a small minority refuge in the revolution, and the traditions of the association had provided a rhythm of religious participation and expression to some lay Catholics. Also, Cuban Church–State relations were affected, as the Office for Religious Affairs in the Central Committee of the Communist Party considered the dissolution as a possible source of negative publicity for the government, possibly internationally interpreted as the repression of religious freedom. To this end, Zacchi was put in charge of the negotiations to create space for the intra-ecclesial restructuring.<sup>251</sup>

With the dissolution, a distinct chapter in Cuba’s ecclesial life came to an end. A supporter of the laity, Archbishop Pérez Serantes did not live to see the development: he passed away in 1968 and was succeeded in Santiago de Cuba’s episcopal see by the auxiliary bishop, Pedro Meurice Estiú.<sup>252</sup> In the same period, the episcopal appointments of Francisco Oves Fernández, Prego Casals, and Pena Gómez reinforced conciliar interpretations of ecclesial life in Cuba.<sup>253</sup> After these appointments, the Cuban episcopate consisted entirely of bishops of Cuban nationality.<sup>254</sup> Furthermore, contemporaries of the period acknowledged the new bishops as supporters of Zacchi, loyal to the Holy See and its diplomatic vision of Cuban Church–State relations.<sup>255</sup> With this dimension, the appointment of the bishops further emphasized the continuity of magisterial hierarchy both on the island and globally.

Following the polarization of Church–State relations and the exclusion of Catholicism from the revolutionary discourse, the episcopate had restrained its public presence in Cuban society. This had reinforced the perception of ecclesial invisibility and silence. The interviewees in this study, as contemporaries of the bishops, suggested that some of the authoritative figures were seized by fear of the regime while others had come to the conclusion that any rescue attempts would be in vain. Some thought resilience and inward resistance were the only

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249 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Fernando Azcárate 6.2.1967; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 10.2.1967; AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 27.2.1967; AHAH AC JN Memorandum 16.5.1966; AHAH AC JN Acción Católica: Forma y método de Apostolado Seglar. Introducción; AHAH AC JN Acción Católica: Forma y método de Apostolado Seglar, segunda parte: el nivel diocesano; AHAH AC JN Acción Católica: Forma y método de Apostolado Seglar, tercera parte: el nivel parroquial; AHAH AC JN Informe, Santiago de Cuba; AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 16.7.1967; Interview 22; Gómez Treto 1988, 61; Uría 2011, 538–540.

250 Gómez Treto 1988, 61–62.

251 For instance, AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó 13.6.1967; AHAH AC JN José Luis Gonzalez to Raúl Gómez Treto 15.6.1967; AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 16.6.1967; AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó to Raúl Gómez Treto 21.7.1967; Uría 2011, 540.

252 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Pedro Meurice 13.6.1967.

253 Appointments to episcopacy are executed as top-down processes from the Holy See to local churches. The process grants the Holy See considerable power to direct the leadership of local churches and thus influence the theology, authority, and discourse in local contexts. See also Gómez Treto 1998, 63–67, 69–70, 75–76; Uría 2011, 541–546.

254 Gómez Treto 1988, 67.

255 Interview 4.

ways to demonstrate that the Church still possessed autonomy and free will.<sup>256</sup> Ecclesial authorities also possibly found a public profile of silence the most convenient way of showing compliance to the Cuban society caught up in the revolutionary fervor, thus reinforcing what the Cuban public perceived about the Church from a revolutionary perspective.

In scholarly work, a recurring argument and presupposition is the silence of the Catholic Church in Cuba from the latter half of the 1960s onwards, which has come to dominate scholarly approaches to and discourse on Catholicism in the revolution. Such a perspective has claimed legitimacy as the paradigmatic narrative for historicizing Cuban ecclesial life and experience. In studies of theology, Enrique Dussel called the Cuban Church “a church of silence” in 1976.<sup>257</sup> In his work, historian John M. Kirk describes the era commencing in the late 1960s as a time spent in the catacombs. Kirk writes, “the seven-year hiatus ... was a period of silence.”<sup>258</sup> Kirk also suggests that the Cuban Episcopal Conference ceased its official activities and maintained a silence for the latter half of the 1960s.<sup>259</sup> Tim Padgett concurs by calling the life of the Church “a quarter-century of dormancy.”<sup>260</sup> Correspondingly, sociologist Silvia Pedraza entitles the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs as an era of “silencing of the church,” in which the Church is forced to retreat as a top-down process by the government. According to Pedraza, the Church remained silenced for a quarter of a century.<sup>261</sup> Uría concurs with the paradigm, referring to the era from the early 1960s onwards as the time of “the church of silence,” instigated by governmental repression.<sup>262</sup>

The argument of the silence of the Catholic Church remains a narrative popular in scholarship. However, while silence has constituted the predominant paradigm of religion in the revolution, Alonso Tejada addresses the claim in both revolutionary narratives and scholarship, arguing against a narrow understanding of the Church as an institutional force: he calls for more dynamic conceptualization and new analytical categories for analyzing Catholicism in the revolution, and issues a call for more scholarly attention to the internal discourse of the Church.<sup>263</sup> Margaret Crahan has similarly called attention to simplistic portrayals of Cuban religiosity through the nature and influence of religious institutions, often overlooking the role of religion in the undercurrents of culture and society as well as the impact on religious belief and value systems for believers, who Crahan claims formed the vast majority of Cubans even in the revolutionary setting.<sup>264</sup> Correspondingly, Alejandro de la Fuente has noted that religion has remained a simultaneously diminished and potent presence in the Cuban revolutionary experience. He further argues that in mapping continuity and change in the revolution, a focus on previously uncharted territories reveals unexpected patterns of continuity occurring in areas where change was supposed to occur by the revolutionary process, such as race and culture.<sup>265</sup>

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256 Interview 1; Interview 2; Interview 3; Interview 4; Interview 5.

257 Dussel 1976, 121.

258 Kirk 1989, 110. See also Kirk 1985.

259 Kirk 1989, 126.

260 Padgett 2008, 108.

261 Pedraza 2007, 107, 108, 240, 262.

262 Uría 2011, 506, 557.

263 Alonso Tejada 1999, 32–33.

264 Crahan 2008, 330–331.

265 de la Fuente 2019, 290.

My research proposes that religion belongs to the unexcavated, potent patterns of both continuity from prerevolutionary era to the revolution, and change occurring in reverse to the revolutionary process.

When discussing the silence, or the silencing, of the Church, one discursive framework is to approach ecclesial life from the perspective of the revolution as an active agent: referring to silence as a condition imposed on the Church by the revolutionary regime, and as a part of the grand narrative of the revolution excluding histories of religious agency from its own accounts of the past. Yet, with an intentional focus on ecclesial voices, extensive amounts of Catholic archival records contest the concept of all-encompassing ecclesial silence. They suggest that the silence prevailed in public relations and the visibility of the institutional Church in Cuban social and public spheres, as defined and controlled by the revolution, but not in ecclesial activities and the self-understanding of both the Church and individual Catholics. Also, the concepts of *testimonio* and witness invite a reexamination of the persistent claim of ecclesial absence and a lack of Catholic agency on the island.

On a national level, internal correspondence from the Cuban Episcopal Conference shows that the conference in fact maintained its essential activities despite the emerging narrative of silence in the late 1960s. Large collections of documentation refer to official meetings of both the bishops as an episcopal synod and the conference's committees by referring to dates and agenda of the meetings, followed by processes of institutional decision-making and the crafting of new policies.<sup>266</sup> Furthermore, the documentation shows that the apostolic nuncio to Cuba, Cesar Zacchi, participated in these activities as an official representative of the Holy See, further signaling the presence of the universal Church in the Cuban context. Zacchi also maintained regular communication with the former lay leaders of Catholic Action.<sup>267</sup>

Archival records suggest that even in the most strained circumstances, the episcopate identified itself as the highest authority and administrative institution, a representative of the universal Church's *magisterium* in Cuba, and it continued to fulfill its role on the island.<sup>268</sup> While bishops did not circulate their normative statements to the public sphere of the revolution, they did so consciously and maintained the function of the episcopal body via its presence, focusing on internal discourse more than exposure to the public sphere. Behind the façade of silence, Pedro Meurice Estíu, archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, and Evelio Díaz y Cía, archbishop of Havana, for instance, resumed active correspondence and communication within the episcopate and, from their desks, with the clergy and laity.<sup>269</sup> According to one cleric, the bishops also continued to visit their local parishes regularly for the feasts of the community's patron saint.<sup>270</sup>

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266 For instance, AHAH AC JN Junta Nacional to Enrique Pérez Serantes 28.1.1965; AHAH AC JN Junta Nacional to Alfredo Muller San Martín 28.1.1965; AHAH AC JN Junta Nacional to Manuel Rodríguez Rozas 28.1.1965.

267 For instance, AHAH AC JN Cesare Zacchi to G. P. 5.1.1963; AHAH AC JN G. P. to Cesare Zacchi 16.1.1963; AHAH AC JN Junta Nacional to Cesare Zacchi 28.1.1965; AHAH AC JN Cesare Zacchi to G. P. 15.2.1965.

268 For instance, AHAH AC JN G. P. to Enrique Pérez Serantes 19.11.1963.

269 For instance, AHAH AC JN Las vocaciones eclesíásticas por Enrique Pérez Serantes 23.10.1963; AHAH AC JFF Los Libros Sagrados por Enrique Pérez Serantes, Vigilia de la Inmaculada Concepción 1963; For personal international contacts and communication of Santiago de Cuba's Archbishop Pérez Serantes until 1968, see Uriá 2011.

270 Interview 29.

#### IV TESTIMONY OF LIFE: 1962–1968

On a diocesan level, ecclesial offices maintained the necessary functions for everyday life. In the archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba, for instance, the diocesan clergy continued to organize collegial meetings on a regular basis. Clergy and laity alike created educational activities, such as pre-matrimonial courses, workshops on Catholic formation, and courses on liturgy and catechesis.<sup>271</sup> At the same time, diocesan communities sought to reinforce an awareness of global Catholicism on the island. For example, in 1967, a group of laity in Camagüey conducted a survey assessing the awareness of Catholics about the distribution and study of conciliar documents. According to the report, the difficult circumstances and recurring material shortages on the island prevented the Church from systematically distributing the conciliar texts or further analyzing the theological outcomes in depth in the Cuban context via establishing a nation-wide reflection on Vatican II: in Camagüey, some parishes engaged with the conciliar documents individually.<sup>272</sup>

Yet, at the same time, the effects of the council were already being witnessed at the grassroots level in communities. Documental sources in Camagüey assessing the liturgical renewal carried out in the diocese by 1967 pointed to a significant increase in lay participation and empowerment in the liturgy. According to the survey, by 1967 the liturgical life of the Church had transformed from clerical to congregational. Yet, since no popular versions of the conciliar documents were available, the language and terminology of the original texts were considered challenging by even the most active laypeople.<sup>273</sup> On the whole, the council was reviewed in a positive light by those with a tentatively positive or a neutral stance towards it. Interestingly, the Camagüey assessment noted that “in hostile contexts, those of Marxist-Leninists, certain interest has occurred in the practical, pastoral outcomes of the Council—more than in the Council itself.”<sup>274</sup> Among the interested observers was Fidel Castro, who saw the council’s explorations into civic participation and renewed social consciousness as possible bridges from the revolution to the Church.<sup>275</sup> Castro later referred to the development as an interest in forming a strategic alliance, enabling the execution of social changes in Cuba.<sup>276</sup>

Together, these records suggest that both the national authorities and representatives of the global Church maintained contact throughout the years. Some of this began to materialize in 1968, when the Cuban government issued travel permits for a group of two bishops and clergy to participate in *Congreso Católico Eucarístico*, a Eucharistic congress attended by Pope Paul VI, in Bogota, Columbia. A month abroad opened new perspectives and communication with the Latin American Catholic community.<sup>277</sup> A year earlier, a group of Catholics had already been authorized to participate in the congress for the laity celebrated in Rome; the travel permits issued by the government had been an attempt to counter international concern about

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271 For instance, AHAH AC JN José Luis González Vásques to Raúl Gómez Treto 19.10.1965; AHAH AC JN Emilio Roca Notó 14.9.1965.

272 AHAH ACC JN 2da Encuesta Preparatoria del III Congreso Mundial del Apostolado de los Laicos.

273 AHAH ACC JN 2da Encuesta Preparatoria del III Congreso Mundial del Apostolado de los Laicos.

274 En los ambientes hostiles, de parte de los Marxistas-Leninistas ha habido cierto interés en determinadas consecuencias pastorales prácticas del Concilio, más que en el Concilio mismo. AHAH ACC JN 2da Encuesta Preparatoria del III Congreso Mundial del Apostolado de los Laicos.

275 Kirk 1989, 122.

276 Fidel y la religión 1985, 279, 284–285.

277 Interview 4.

the repression of religion caused by the dissolution of Catholic Action.<sup>278</sup> Further contesting the narratives of ecclesial absence and a lack of agency were the international relations formed by the Cuban Church through personal encounters. In 1968, following CELAM's third general assembly in Medellín, Colombia, the Cuban Church established official relations and cooperation with Adveniat, a German organization providing financial assistance for churches in Latin America. In Cuba, Adveniat contributed financially to social aid for retired clergy.<sup>279</sup> The remaining excerpts of correspondence between Cuba and Germany, archived in the collections of COCC, date to the years 1966–1968.

Adveniat had initiated communication with the Episcopal Conference already the preceding year, inquiring into the needs of the Cuban clergy for aid; the offer had been returned, however, with a modified proposal by Evelio Díaz. Explaining to Adveniat that the current circumstances—State control over the economy and financial transactions—did not support direct cooperation, the Cuban Church requested that Adveniat direct its funds to the Holy See, from where the Cuban Church could request financial assistance upon necessity.<sup>280</sup> To this end, the Cuban bishops had initiated communication with the Canadian *Société de Missions-Etrangères* in request of assistance. In his correspondence with Father Gilles Oullet in the spring of 1967, Archbishop Díaz proposed that the Canadian organization could serve as a mediator; according to Díaz, the Holy See would deliver its assistance to the Cuban Church through Adveniat, which would in turn use the mediation of *Missions-Etrangères* to deliver the financial aid to Cuba.<sup>281</sup> The exchange through the Holy See was never realized: instead, after the Medellín conference, the cooperation was established in Cuba under the commission “Fraternity of Priests.”<sup>282</sup> These documents clearly demonstrate that the Cuban Church not only maintained consistent communication with European Catholic communities, but also began to negotiate financial support from Europe during a period that has been described—both in international scholarship as well as by some Cuban Catholics themselves—as an age of deep silence, profound isolation, and international absence for the Church in Cuba.

Similarly contesting accounts were voiced from within the Cuban Church. In an interview, when discussing the late 1960s and the transition to the early 1970s, a Cuban cleric declared with a passionate tone: “We were never, never, a church of silence!” In this context, “the church of silence” referred to the term employed as a reference to the situation of the churches under communist regimes in the Eastern Bloc: the cleric rejected the use of the term in the Cuban context. He referred to the resumed activities, albeit reduced, and the continued presence of the clergy and laity in local communities, defending what he saw as an intrinsically Cuban interpretation of ecclesial continuity against foreign views on silence imposed from outside of

278 AHAH AC JN 2da Encuesta Preparatoria del III Congreso Mundial del Apostolado de los Laicos; Interview 27; Uría 2011, 540.

279 COCC AD Evelio Díaz Cía to Paul Hoffacker 11.7.1968; COCC AD Pedro Meurice Estiú to Paul Hoffacker 23.10.1968; COCC AD Respuesta a la Circular – Cuestionario enviado por ADVENIAT sobre asistencia social al Clero; COCC AD Clero Secular Actualmente Encardinado en las Diócesis de Cuba; Clero Regular Actualmente Residente en las Diócesis de Cuba. Noviembre de 1968.

280 COCC AD Paul Hoffacker to Evelio Díaz Cía 7.12.1967; COCC AD Evelio Díaz Cía to Paul Hoffacker 7.3.1968.

281 COCC ADVENIAT Evelio Díaz Cía to Gilles Oullet 4.4.1967; COCC ADVENIAT Evelio Díaz Cía to Franz Hengsbach 4.4.1967.

282 COCC AD Pedro Meurice to Fernando Azcárate; COCC AD Pedro Meurice Estiú to Paul Hoffacker 23.10.1968.

the revolutionary reality. He explained, with fierce enthusiasm, that the Church could not be synonymously reduced to just the episcopal hierarchy. Criticizing the more institutional perspectives on ecclesial life, the cleric instead placed a defining emphasis on the grassroots level, on the everyday of religion in the revolution. In daily life, he insisted, the communities continued to profess and perform their faith.<sup>283</sup> As such, local communities and individual Catholics defied not only the framework of the revolution, but also the construction of institutional silence and, as this study shows, the interpretations of Cuban ecclesial life from afar.

By the end of the 1960s, it became increasingly important to highlight the presence of the universal Church in Cuba through participation at the congregational level as a visible sign of a church that “manifests its life through us who form the Church.” In theological understanding, commitment to the laity in Cuba equaled serving the Church and the Holy Spirit, which made the Church come alive also in Cuba. In the particular moment, lay leaders expressed a sense of novelty and change: “We are the children of our own time. We are all young ... and ‘modern’ . Let us be such also in ecclesial sense: ‘ecclesiology’ gains force in the aftermath of World War I and acquires its major growth through Vatican II.”<sup>284</sup>

It is noteworthy that in the Cuban Catholic experience, a sense of novelty and youth was not born only from the changing landscapes in Cuba, by the revolution, its politics, or its economic or social impacts, but also by global Catholicism and the sense of modernity in the 1960s as a global experience. Not only was the Cuban revolution young, but the Cuban Church too was young and continuously searching for its place in global Catholicism. The relevance of the Church, its teaching, and the clergy in Cuba was acknowledged not only in the context of the revolution but also as a course of development in global Catholicism in the era of modernity in the late 1960s. In a world where the Catholic Church was redefining its relevance and media of engagement, the Church in Cuba began to embark on the same reflections.

## 6. Discussion

This chapter began by addressing claims that the Church had disappeared in the revolutionary society. Tracing discourse and experiences pronounced by voices in the episcopal hierarchy, clergy, and laity, the sources presented in the chapter provide new perspectives to and contest the visions of silence, absence, and non-existence. The sources reveal a myriad of both local and global agencies and exchanges, taking place simultaneously and with overlapping themes. They show how Vatican II was received and interpreted in the middle of the revolutionary reality, how visions on the future of the Church were imagined by and through the laity in particular, and how Catholics navigated their lives as a distinct social cohort in Cuba. At the same time, the sources provide striking insights into the way in which the course of the revolutionary process, particularly regarding migration from the island, was experienced and interpreted from perspectives of Catholic teaching and spirituality.

The chapter showed how newly accessible archival sources and previously unpronounced individual histories enable a critical examination and problematize perspectives that reinforce

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283 Interview 23.

284 Somos hijos de nuestra época. Todos somos jóvenes... y “modernos.” Pero, seámoslo también eclesiásticamente: la “eclesiología” toma fuerza a partir de la Primera Guerra Mundial, y adquiere bajo el Concilio Vaticano II su mayor auge. AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín: Iglesia.

narratives of silence and absence in both scholarly work and accounts produced on the island. Furthermore, when archival resources are bridged with oral histories, they show it necessary to distinguish between institutional histories and lived experiences of silence and its many perceptions. Several threads of ecclesial agency in the chapter challenge the construction of silence: the engagement in and reception of Vatican II in Cuba, with its renewed focus on theology of the laity and the attempted restructuring of lay organizations, diocesan, and congregational activities, together with international dialogue of the episcopate and ecclesial hierarchy, point towards sustained agency both institutionally and in the everyday of the revolution.

As the concept of *testimonio* also suggests, not only the definition of Church but also that of silence in scholarly reconstructions of ecclesial history in the revolution should be problematized. As the chapter proposed, the focus on institutional silence is both misleading and directs the lens of focus to a narrow understanding of what constitutes the Church and its agency. Furthermore, lived religion offers a new perspective into conceptualizing Catholicism and religious media in the revolution. When approached from the perspective of lived religion, existing together with more institutional agency, laypeople embedded in the everyday of the revolution were constructing realities of the intertwining, intrinsically overlapping spheres of religiosity and revolutionary Cubanness. As such, Catholics also participated in the performance of the revolution by establishing spaces for presence and agency in the everyday, leaving a distinct mark on the revolutionary process through Catholic experience and interpretation. This perspective further contests the narratives of absence and silence, providing more layered and nuanced accounts of Catholic participation in the revolutionary reality as a shared space and discourse for Cubans.

As illustrated in this chapter, both documental and oral sources show how religion both pertains to the unexplored areas of the revolution and constitutes an unacknowledged domain of continuity as opposed to the binary propositions suggested by preceding scholarly work. Yet at the same time, the individual histories presented in this chapter testify to changes, ambiguity, and layered experiences, with elements of both continuity and change. As the interpretations of the Camarioca episode suggest, the histories of Cuban Catholics portray both a sense of rupture, changes in thoughts and attitudes, and a sense of continuity connecting with the spiritual presence of faith. This chapter has thus also invited scholars to critically analyze further the patterns of continuity embedded in change and change occurring in conjunction with continuity at the junctions of religion and the revolution.



## V TINY TEMPLES: 1969–1978

### 1. A New Social Consciousness

“This is the point we reached in our agreement with the government: to rejoice in all the good, and to suffer all the bad.”<sup>1</sup> With these words, a former seminarian illustrated the shift in the social consciousness of Cuban Catholics occurring from the late 1960s onwards. As was also suggested by the then-seminarian, now a priest, an essential influence behind the shift was the Second General Assembly of Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) organized in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968. The conference had been a Latin American initiative to interpret and disseminate the conclusions of Vatican II in the region, becoming a turning point in the self-identification of Latin American Catholicism. As a result, a seismic shift was experienced in the global dynamics of Catholicism: in Medellín, the Latin American Church had pronounced a renewed social awareness and commitment to the prevailing social conditions of the region.<sup>2</sup>

Since the Medellín conference was attended by representatives of the Cuban Church,<sup>3</sup> its repercussions were reflected upon and discussed on multiple occasions on the island following the event. The Episcopal Conference convened to study the final document, and several pastoral letters were drafted as a result of the collective interpretation of the conference and its significance for Cuba.<sup>4</sup> Internationally, the results of the reflection are mostly known through the publication of two pastoral letters by the episcopate in the spring of 1969.<sup>5</sup>

The first of the letters, published on April 10 and coinciding with the eighth anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion, was an attempt to pronounce Latin American Catholic social doctrine in a Cuban context. The latter, dated September 3rd, was a more in-depth reflection on Medellín’s final document and a guideline provided by the episcopate for navigating the newly acknowledged ecclesial and social realities in Cuba.<sup>6</sup> As such, the publications were received as a publicly normative voice of the episcopate over the clergy, religious orders and the laity, as an attempt to portray the institutional presence of the Church within revolutionary society.

The tone of the letters followed the discourses of Vatican II and Medellín. Tying the development of ecclesial life in Cuba to the emerging impact of Vatican II and its interpretation in Latin America, the letters of 1969 may be seen as public expressions of conciliar commitment: as declarations of the episcopate’s new socio-ethical emphasis for the Church in the modern world, they attempted to bridge the Cuban Church with the prevailing social context on the island. This was particularly visible in the first letter, in which the episcopate forcefully portrayed the emerging social doctrine of the Church. The letter condemned the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba, stating that the “unjust conditions” of the blockade created “grave inconveniences”

1 Interview 6.

2 Lehmann 1996, 50; Tombs 2002, 96–97, 107–111; Krier Mich 2004, 241–243; Brady 2008, 154.

3 Interview 2; Interview 6; Interview 23; Interview 24.

4 See, for instance, VC 27.4.1969.

5 These two pastoral letters are included in the collection of publications, *La Voz de la Iglesia*, which may be seen as a construction of the canon of authoritative publications by the Cuban episcopate, as discussed in chapters I and III.

6 Comunicado 10.4.1969; Comunicado 3.9.1969. Upon their publication, the letters were consciously entitled *comunicados* in order to avoid the political and politicized connotation of the pastoral letters of 1959–1961.

for every Cuban both in labor and domestic life.<sup>7</sup> Although the argumentation stemmed from the search for the common good of the people, many within the Church saw the stance of the bishops as an inclination towards submission to the State and government. For this reason, the statement generated controversy among Cuban Catholics both on the island and in the United States.

In discussing the reception of the letters in Cuba, both Crahan and Kirk highlight the controversy raised by the first publication among Cuban Catholics. For ecclesial traditionalists, the episcopate's commitment to Vatican II was problematic; for the clergy and laity, who rejected any rapprochement with the revolution, the letters appeared scandalously approving of the government; for the most progressive of Catholics, the letters and the attempted dialogue with Cuban society seemed long overdue and timid.<sup>8</sup> While Kirk argues for the overshadowing effect of the first letter over the second publication in September, he also notes the remarkable ecclesial implications of the latter.<sup>9</sup>

The second letter, directed at the clergy and Catholic communities, voiced a deeper reflection of Medellín transformed into action through guidelines and norms for pastoral work and Catholic presence in the revolution. While identifying contemporary atheism as an issue faced by the Church in the modern world, the document focused on highlighting Catholic faith as a process of growth through liturgy, the Bible, catechesis, mature understanding and commitment to faith, and witnessing in everyday life. On these areas, the bishops constructed policies for the clergy to follow in Cuba: continuous renewal of liturgy according to Vatican II, organized study of the Bible by laypeople, the necessity to further develop catechesis in order to educate the laity, and the need to support individuals and communities in daily profession of spirituality and Catholic morals.<sup>10</sup>

The letters of 1969 also constructed and officiated the new normativity pronounced by the episcopate: open acknowledgment of the positive achievements of the revolution and approval of them. Among the key personalities involved in drafting the letters was Francisco Oves, who explored opening dialogue with the revolution by acknowledging its positive achievements in society and the Catholic appreciation of increasing social justice.<sup>11</sup> The letters made visible the shift already rooted in the experiences of clergy and laity on the island: the movement from the margins of the revolution to within it via the shared realities of daily life and kinship. Through the pastoral letters, the voice of the episcopate was transmitted to the grassroots level. As such, its normativity inevitably became tested and contested in day-to-day reality.

Evidence on the contestation is provided by the archival sources: the discourse of Cuba's clergy and seminarians in the fall of 1969 reveals the extent to which the episcopal voice of the letters differed from the experiences and expressions of religion at the grassroots level. Seminarians criticized the letter of September for revealing the profound disconnection of the episcopate from the reality of the streets and the problems faced by lay Catholics. At the same time, seminarians pointed out the ignorance and isolation of both clergy and laity to the guidelines

7 Comunicado 10.4.1969.

8 Crahan 1985; Kirk 1989, 127–131.

9 Kirk 1989, 129.

10 Comunicado 3.9.1969.

11 Alonso Tejada 1999, 36.

provided by the episcopal hierarchy.<sup>12</sup> Some of them defended the letter by insisting on the division of Catholics as a source of “the excess of immature criticism” on the episcopate’s policy guidelines.<sup>13</sup> Yet as a whole, the letter was not received well by many sectors in society, as was acknowledged by priests from Pinar del Río, Matanzas, and Las Villas.<sup>14</sup> Within the Church, the mixed responses were interpreted as lack of cohesion and unity.<sup>15</sup> In this manner, the letter and its reception reflected a deeper discrepancy among the clergy and laity: shifting boundaries of political and pastoral thought within the Church. According to Crahan, this resulted in a considerable number of young lay activists leaving the Church, further consolidating the normativity pronounced by the leadership.<sup>16</sup>

At the heart of the confused responses was a lack of vision on what it meant for the Church to be socially conscious, yet not politically active—and whether the stance was unanimously agreed upon or even possible at all. The tone of the second letter, some of Havana’s priests complained, caused Cubans to read it as a political message, especially when read in light of the first publication and interpreted from a politicized perspective instead of recognizing the theological undercurrents of the statement. Yet, the clergy also acknowledged the true issue behind the politicized responses: it was paradoxical for the Church to claim an apolitical stance in the revolution when the predominant point of critique in all published, normative voices of the episcopate had concerned politics. As the priests dryly remarked, while the first pastoral letters in the revolution had condemned Marxism, the latest was now set about condemning the U.S. trade embargo in accordance with the Cuban government.<sup>17</sup>

In scholarly work historicizing Cuban ecclesial history and the history of Cuban Church–State relations, the letters of 1969 are treated as a curiosity, an exceptional opening in the long-prevailing absence of the Church from the public sphere. In the episodic treatment of the histories and agencies of Catholicism in the revolution in international scholarship, the publications have been used as markers ending a period of silence for the Church initiated in 1961 with the disappearance of normative voices and written evidence. From this perspective, the 1969 publications mark the emergence of the Church into public discussion.<sup>18</sup> Since archival silence has prevented deeper analysis of the intra-ecclesial discourse preceding the letters, they seem to appear as having emerged suddenly, as abrupt declarations opening up a new conversation. In this perspective, the historical processes occurring in the internal life of the Church, grassroots experiences, daily realities, and unofficial discourse remains unacknowledged. However, as the newly accessible sources clearly demonstrate, the letters of 1969 built on continuing, preceding discourse within the Church; although previously unknown to scholarly analysis, the discourse

12 COCC AY Equipo No. 4 – Seminaristas teólogos.

13 COCC AY Equipo No. 11 Seminaristas no teólogos.

14 COCC AY Equipo No. 5 Sacerdotes de las Diócesis de Pinar del Río, Matanzas y Las Villas 16.9.1969.

15 COCC AY Equipo No. 10 – Laicos–jóvenes 16.9.1969.

16 Crahan 1985.

17 COCC AY Equipo No. 3 – Clero Habana–Campo 16.9.1969.

18 The 1969 letters have been discussed by Crahan 1979 and 1985, Kirk 1989, and Alonso Tejada 1999. De La Torre calls the letters “a decisive break with the past.” De La Torre 2002, 101.

nevertheless did exist and was potent in its transformative power. Furthermore, the most publicized letters did not remain the sole voices of magisterium, let alone ecclesial discourse: likewise, other publications<sup>19</sup> on the island continued to reflect on and further develop the ideas.

As a clear sign of increasing internal discourse, and more interesting than the distilled accounts for public study by the bishops, were the voices emerging from the churches, convents, and homes of Cuban Catholics in 1969. In September, shortly after the second pastoral letter was published, these new voices rose within the Church to assess the prevailing conditions for pastoral work and ecclesial activities. For the first time in years, clergy and laity formally convened to discuss their experiences in future-orientated reflection. Although the extensive discourse and its results were not made public on the island or internationally, they both voiced the experience of the Church as a community and directed the paradigmatic change taking place within the lived reality of Catholics on the island.

Providing a framework for the reflection was the course on pastoral work directed by French Canonist Fernando Boulard, who at the time served as the assessor of the Episcopal Conference in France. In Havana and Santiago de Cuba, Boulard directed two courses for reflection on the social and pastoral work in Cuba. Clergy, religious orders, and laity from all dioceses signed up for the course: 200 representatives from Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey, and Cienfuegos came together at the national sanctuary of El Cobre, while participants from Havana, Matanzas, and Pinar del Río gathered in the capital at the convent of *La Inmaculada*.<sup>20</sup> Crahan proposes that the meeting was organized with the objective “to iron out some of the differences” under the authority of a Vatican representative.<sup>21</sup>

Boulard began his visit with the celebration of Cuba’s patron saint, *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*, on September 8<sup>th</sup> in Havana and concluded it with an extensive summarizing meeting at the Episcopal Conference.<sup>22</sup> As a Catholic sociologist, Boulard was profoundly familiar with both the socio-political realities of Cuba and the Cuban inter-ecclesial dynamics in the post-conciliar era, and he initiated in Cuba a systematic reflection on the prevailing conditions of both Catholicism and the revolution. Boulard had already conducted similar work in counseling local churches in Latin America, and he has later been acknowledged as an essential influence for several Latin American churches in their process of renewal with respect to post-Vatican II theology and pastoral work.<sup>23</sup>

The reflection resulted in a candid critique of both the Church and prevailing circumstances. The general tone of the discourse repeatedly focused on the hardships faced by Cubans in the late 1960s. The revolutionary reality of everyday life was depicted as a daily struggle to overcome shortages and deprivation. In contrast to the tumultuous early 1960s, the end of the

19 See, for instance, VC 27.4.1969: a published version of a pastoral letter by the episcopate, read in churches during the Mass of the preceding Sunday, April 20, 1969. This publication does not pertain to the established and analyzed documents in scholarly work.

20 COCC AY Importante.

21 Crahan 1985. Crahan’s analysis draws on an oral source. In this research, henceforth, the meeting is discussed via a collection of primary documents stored in the Archive of the Cuban Catholic Bishops’ Conference. COCC AY contains a complete body of notes from the meeting, the minutia of the reflection, the summaries of the discussion as drafted by the working groups, and the final document delivered to the Cuban bishops for a follow-up discussion and concluding proceedings.

22 COCC AY Visita del Canonigo Fernando Boulard.

23 Klaiber 1996, 371; Olimón Nolasco.

decade saw an era of stability and security for the revolution as an established framework of life.<sup>24</sup> The focus in the revolutionary experience thus began to shift from ideological fervor to more pragmatic issues of the everyday. Yet in the space of restricted expression, as argued in scholarly work, ordinary Cubans had limited opportunities to influence the course of the revolution.<sup>25</sup>

The everyday had also become a priority for many Catholics, with the Church being able to offer space for discourse on both the revolutionary process and the Church's role in it. An overarching sentiment expressed in the reflection of 1969 was frustration with the lack of coherence within the Church and strategies for addressing the crucial social problems on the island.<sup>26</sup> One of the most acute issues was migration: the clergy described in detail the apathy they sensed in people, connecting it with the growing number of Cubans leaving the island. They scorned their fellow Cubans, who "rely more on people (Americans) for solutions to the problems of life,"<sup>27</sup> instead of turning to the Church for support or to the State for accountability for the issues at hand. Yet, some of the clergy also acknowledged the role of the Church in contributing to the exodus by encouraging migration and recommending to believers that they leave the country as an objection to revolutionary politics and daily life in the revolution.<sup>28</sup>

In intra-ecclesial life, the reflection made visible the disorganization of pastoral work, the lack of both human and material resources, and the undefined relations between clergy and laity in daily life. The lack of coherent, collective reflection on the preceding decade had resulted in a lack of common guidelines, mismanagement, and discrepancies between dioceses. Priests were asking for more organization and normative, established structures for their daily work, for national and local strategies, and for obligatory local committees with joint plans for work. For resources of concrete pastoral work, they requested monthly retreats and courses on further education, material support for preparing homilies, and deeper theological reflection. Priests in rural dioceses demanded more equal distribution of clergy on the island: the great majority of clergy residing in Havana resulted in an excessive workload for clergy in the countryside. Intra-ecclesial financial resources were also seen as unjustly distributed between the capital, other cities, and rural communities.<sup>29</sup>

Critics also addressed the episcopate. Seminarians demanded from both the episcopate and clerics more attention to the experiences and needs of ordinary Cubans and concrete action to confront the issues affecting everyday life.<sup>30</sup> Members of religious orders for women noted that the episcopate lacked dialogue with the laity in particular.<sup>31</sup> In terms of their active participation in social reality, young laity saw the authoritative and normative role of the episcopate as a hindrance, calling it an "exaggeration of authority that barely takes into account the opinion

24 Pérez 2015a, 277.

25 Pérez-Stable 2012, 106; Pedraza 2007, 218.

26 COCC AY Equipo No. 3 – Clero Habana–Campo 16.9.1969.

27 COCC AY Equipo No. 3 – Clero Habana–Campo 16.9.1969.

28 COCC AY Equipo No. 3 – Clero Habana–Campo 16.9.1969.

29 COCC AY Equipo No. 1 Sacerdotes de la Capital; Equipo No. 2 Sacerdotes de La Habana; Equipo No. 5 Sacerdotes de las Diócesis de Pinar del Río, Matanzas y Cienfuegos; COCC AY Seminaristas no-teólogos; COCC AY Equipo No. 1 – Sacerdotes de la Capital 16.9.1969; COCC AY Equipo No. 2 – Sacerdotes de la Capital 16.9.1969; COCC AY Curso de Santiago.

30 COCC AY Equipo No. 4 – Seminaristas teólogos; COCC AY Equipo No. 11 Seminaristas no teólogos 16.9.1969.

31 COCC AY Equipo No. 6 – Religiosas dedicadas al apostolado 16.9.1969.

of the People of God.”<sup>32</sup> Some of the clergy criticized “the triumphalist vision of the Church” maintained by a hierarchy alienated from reality and the people, which resulted in a mentality of martyrdom and a “ghetto spirit, closing in on ourselves.”<sup>33</sup> Both clergy and laity admitted to intra-parochial disagreements on integration into and dissimulation from the revolutionary society. In contradiction to younger generations of laity, they expressed a wish for more leadership and direction from the bishops for straightening out disagreements.<sup>34</sup>

Among clergy, priests invoked a call for more intentionally organized peer support, particularly for those suffering from “the loneliness for a priest,” living in isolation in rural communities, although the priests also noted that the recent past and conditions of the revolution had made them more reclusive and in need of internal preparation in order to embrace a more collective orientation towards work. In the most candid of commentaries, priests noted the hostility of the revolutionary culture, resulting in a rejection of the clergy in daily life, which sometimes resulted in damage to the self-identification and mental health of priests. Similar observations were made by seminarians, who noted the need for more consistent support for clergy in psychologically challenging circumstances.<sup>35</sup>

The reflection revealed critical discrepancies in pastoral orientation and work. While the clergy requested more resources for theological work, with interest in renewed explorations in the wake of Vatican II and Medellín, laypeople asked the clergy to direct more resources towards concrete work at the grassroots level: they required from the clergy a profound understanding of and personal familiarity with the daily life of the laity and a commitment to getting their hands dirty, away from the safety of doctrinal declarations and intellectual distance.<sup>36</sup> Laypeople described the formation of the episcopate and clergy as “canonic, dehumanized, and outdated both doctrinally and socially,” and demanded more education and exchange between the clergy and laity in order to update the theological and pastoral foundations of the Church.<sup>37</sup> Most importantly, priests were asked to share in the daily reality of Catholics in the revolution, “that they assume with the laity the risks that come with their orientation”<sup>38</sup>—that priests would understand and take seriously the stigma and risks that the public profession of Catholicism entailed for laypeople in Cuba in the late 1960s.

The requests of the laity reflected a new ecclesiological understanding of the Church stemming from Vatican II and Medellín. As laypeople expressed their commitment to assist in daily work, they demanded that they be taken seriously as autonomous subjects; laypeople expected priests to accept them as equals in the life of local communities, in full and active participation as the People of God. This included, for instance, more freedom for the laity to assume responsibilities of administration and worship in rural areas where priests attended several

32 COCC AY Equipo No. 10 – Laicos-jóvenes 16.9.1969.

33 COCC AY Equipo No. 3 – Clero Habana-Campo 16.9.1969.

34 COCC AY Equipo No. 9 – Laicos adultos, otras diócesis.

35 COCC AY Equipo No. 1 Sacerdotes de la Capital; Equipo No. 2 Sacerdotes de La Habana; Equipo No. 5 Sacerdotes de las Diócesis de Pinar del Río, Matanzas y Cienfuegos; COCC AY Seminaristas no-teólogos; COCC AY Equipo No. 2 – Sacerdotes de la Capital 16.9.1969; COCC AY Equipo No. 3 – Sacerdotes Campo-Habana 17.9.1969.

36 COCC AY Equipo No. 10; COCC AY Equipo No. 9 – Laicos Adultos; COCC AY Equipo No. 12; COCC AY Equipo No. 14; COCC AY Conclusiones del segundo día.

37 COCC AY Equipo No. 8 – Laicos-adultos, La Habana.

38 Qua asuma con los laicos los riesgos que su orientación conlleva. COCC AY Equipo No. 12; COCC AY Equipo No. 14.

communities. Some built a theological argument on the role of the laity: priests were to see laypeople as the Church, forming its pulse in everyday life. This sometimes required that the clergy descend from a position of superiority—and led laypeople to ask, what they could do when the priests were not willing to accept their participation. Correspondingly, the laity claimed to understand priests for their deficiencies as human beings and failures at work, while also demanding equal treatment for lay families, optimism, and sincerity from local priests.<sup>39</sup>

In the frames of the revolutionary reality, the reflection began to direct the Church, as expressed by clergy, to “accept the current reality as a part of Christ’s redemptory work.”<sup>40</sup> Priests from rural dioceses emphasized the importance of factual knowledge on Marxism among the clergy as a precondition for dialogue.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, openly political discourse by the clergy was disapproved of, and priests were encouraged not to openly reminisce about the political and politicized experiences of recent years.<sup>42</sup> A similar remark was made by sisters in religious orders: according to them, “respectful silence” was a gateway to dialogue. As a whole, clergy and religious orders emphasized that it was crucial for the Church to approach and integrate itself with the revolutionary society, thus offering “a testimony of accepting the situation we live in as it is”<sup>43</sup>—yet this was not to be achieved through direct political participation, but via a renewed ecclesial commitment to service of the people instead.

From the clerics’ perspective, despite the challenging encounters in daily exchanges, the laity was seen as a bridge from the Church to the revolution. In the reflection, priests generally took a cautious approach to publicly Catholic civic participation, reminding both themselves and the laity of “prudence and discretion in order to proceed slowly and not provoke contradictory reactions.”<sup>44</sup> Clergy underscored the importance of moral conduct and civilized behavior as testimonies of character for Catholics.<sup>45</sup> Havana’s priests also expressed their concern over the “double censorship” of religious expression by both the government and Catholics themselves: erasure of religion from public space and expression by policies and practices alike.<sup>46</sup> In her work, Schmidt discusses self-censorship, *la autocensura*, as a dynamic in which some Cubans refrained from voicing complaints or criticism that could be interpreted as contrary to the revolution.<sup>47</sup>

39 COCC AY Equipo 8 - Laicos Adultos; COCC AY Equipo No. 9 – Laicos Adultos; COCC AY Equipo No. 10.

40 COCC AY Equipo No. 1 – Sacerdotes de la Capital.

41 COCC AY Equipo No. 5 – Sacerdotes de las Diócesis de Pinar del Río, Matanzas y Cienfuegos.

42 COCC AY Equipo No. 1 – Sacerdotes de la Capital 17.9.1969; COCC AY Conclusiones del segundo día.

43 El testimonio de la aceptación de la situación en que vivimos como ella es. COCC AY Equipo No. 3 – Sacerdotes Campo-Habana 17.9.1969; COCC AY Equipo No. 7 – Religiosas de Obras Sociales.

44 Prudencia y discreción para ir lentamente y no provocar reacciones contrarias. COCC AY Equipo No. 1 – Sacerdotes de la Capital 17.9.1969.

45 COCC AY Equipo No. 5 – Sacerdotes de las Diócesis de Pinar del Río, Matanzas y Cienfuegos; COCC AY Equipo No. 1 – Sacerdotes de la Capital 17.9.1969.

46 COCC AY Equipo No. 1 – Sacerdotes de la Capital; Equipo No. 2 Sacerdotes de La Habana; Equipo No. 5 Sacerdotes de las Diócesis de Pinar del Río, Matanzas y Cienfuegos.

47 Schmidt 2015, 213. Schmidt further concludes that on a collective level, la autocensura has silenced public discussion on societal and political issues, impeding their resolution, and altered the historical knowledge passed on to future generations. Among these histories, as both this study and the work by Schmidt argue, are the histories of religion both omitted from the revolutionary narratives and self-censored by religious Cubans themselves.

Already in 1969, both the clergy and religious orders also encouraged laypeople to seek personal encounters and dialogue with revolutionaries<sup>48</sup> in acknowledging the positive values of Marxism, identifying similarities between Christianity and communism, particularly in the search for a common good.<sup>49</sup> They insisted that too much work had been left undone for fear of contributing to the sustaining of the socialist system in the process.<sup>50</sup> Seminarians pointed out that “the spirit of service” was a shared conviction of both Marxists and Catholics and led to conscious commitment to the fatherland.<sup>51</sup>

In their commitment to the *patria*, laypeople were instructed to take part in voluntary work organized by the State and mass organizations of the revolution, such as working in schools in the countryside,<sup>52</sup> and to not object to obligatory military service.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps most controversial was the suggestion that laypeople integrate into Military Units to Aid Production.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, further promoting social participation, laypeople called the role of the Church in these actual circumstances “a defensive posture,” and they advocated more proactive planning and organization for both pastoral work and social commitment.<sup>55</sup> According to laypeople, it was crucial to “acquire a consciousness of our responsibility with the country and situation that’s fallen on us to live in.”<sup>56</sup> The commentaries by laypeople also suggested that they perceived interest in the Church among militant revolutionaries, portrayed by their “unrest” in not possessing sufficient knowledge about the life of the Church on the island, most

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48 The term “revolutionary” is somewhat ambiguous in this context. As the Catholic discourse itself shows, the definition of revolutionaries was not uniform or clear in the lived reality of revolution. As such, the term warrants more complex discourse on how it was defined and used in the late 1960s. In historical sources, the references made to the term by Catholics propose a more nuanced understanding than the persistent, institutionally prevailing definitions both stemming from and contributing to polarization and binaries by the manners in which “a revolutionary” was either defined by the Cuban State or individuals inside and in the margins of the revolutionary process. This study suggests a more complex understanding of revolutionary Cubanness by showing how some Cuban Catholics, both clergy and laity, identified as simultaneously Catholics and supporters of the revolution despite their exclusion from the definition of ideal revolutionary citizenry provided by the revolutionary narrative.

49 COCC AY Equipo No. 5 – Sacerdotes de las Diócesis de Pinar del Río, Matanzas y Cienfuegos; COCC AY Equipo No. 6 – Religiosas del Interior; COCC AY Curso Santiago; COCC AY Equipo No. 1 – Sacerdotes de la Capital 17.9.1969; COCC AY Equipo No. 2 – Sacerdotes de la Habana 17.9.1969; COCC AY Equipo No. 3 – Sacerdotes Campo-Habana 17.9.1969.

50 COCC AY Equipo No. 13 – Clero Habana–Campo.

51 COCC AY Equipo No. 11 – Seminaristas no teólogos.

52 Schools in the countryside, *Escuela al campo*, was a program of agricultural work for Cuban youth, designed to teach them appreciation of agriculture in rural areas. According to Fernández, participation in the program also served for young Cubans as a culture of peer encounter. However, the poor management and inefficiency of work at the camps also facilitated disrespect and informal resistance to State control and the official discourse of the revolutionary process, eroding the legitimacy of the State. Fernández 2000, 91.

53 SMO, *Servicio Militar Obligatorio*, was introduced by the government in 1963, ordering all male citizens between seven and forty-five years of age to serve in the military. According to Gómez Treto, SMO was interpreted by some as a measure of restricting individual freedom as those meeting the requirements for service were not allowed to leave the country. See Gómez Treto 1988, 59.

54 UMAP, *Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción*, were work camps in operation from 1965 to 1968. At the time of the ecclesial reflection in September 1969, the program had already ended. It nevertheless remained in public awareness and imagination as a punitive system for dissidence, opposition, and individuals not integrated into the revolution. Particularly relevant for this study is the perception of UMAP as a social experiment, corresponding to the government’s vision of the homogenization of Cubans by excluding socially unaccepted groups of people. For a discussion on UMAP and social control, see Sierra Madero 2016.

55 COCC AY Equipo No. 9 – Laicos adultos, otras diócesis.

56 Adquirir la conciencia de nuestra responsabilidad en el país y la situación que nos ha tocado de vivir. COCC AY Equipo No. 8 – Laicos Adultos.



importantly in relation to new currents of Catholic social thought and conciliar theology.<sup>57</sup> These interpretations suggest that within the revolution's continuous demand for loyalty and support, pockets of critical reflection on the revolution's stance on religion either prevailed or had gained new space.

Lay groups themselves emphasized daily life as the most productive context for dialogue with the revolution. Work, studies, family, and neighborhood life, with all its material difficulties, sports, and the long lines Cubans stood in on a daily basis when waiting for rationed goods, formed a shared reality for Catholics and Marxists alike.<sup>58</sup> In this reality, lay Catholics wished to be respected for their commitment to work and efficacy in fulfilling their duties as citizens. In daily life, personal relations were born out of the intention "to see an individual as a human being, not a political or ideological enemy."<sup>59</sup>

In the daily encounters of Catholics and communists, proselytism was rejected, yet evangelization emphasized. According to priests in rural areas, proselytism was the negative characteristic of a church defining itself through rights and privileges instead of the obligation to act in service to people. To this end, laypeople were advised to continue their work within local communities, seeking opportunities to promote Catholicism at any possible moment through daily work, presence, and interpersonal encounters.<sup>60</sup> Shared experiences, particularly those of struggle, surpassed ideological boundaries. Particularly significant in this work was the presence of members of religious orders for women, who served as a distinct bridge from the Church to society.<sup>61</sup> In their everyday, sisters were in constant exchange with families, sick, the elderly, children, and individuals seeking social support. Sisters described their work as a service of creating "an atmosphere of friendship, understanding and attention" by extending their work outside the immediate domain of the Church. In the challenging economic and social circumstances, religious orders engaged in social work saw the value of their daily presence among Cubans in "sowing the seed of hope" at the face of the quotidian challenges people faced.<sup>62</sup>

Both documental sources and interviews in particular emphasize that sisters in religious orders recognized the positive impact their work had among revolutionaries; their work was appreciated in society if not for its spiritual nature, at least for its efficient organization and availability. In their work, sisters also witnessed and discussed the positive values of the revolution portrayed by Cubans in their daily life: loyalty, integrity, and justice, which could serve

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57 COCC AY Equipo # 9. Laicos Adultos.

58 Food rationing was introduced in 1962; see Smith & Padula 1996, 60. The lines for rationed food as a shared Cuban experience in the late 1960s and patience as a revolutionary virtue when standing in lines is discussed, for example, by Fagen 1969. Smith & Padula also discuss the shared experience of waiting in lines, the sense of frustration, and the experience of losing time in idle, quotidian chores. Smith & Padula 1996, 151.

59 Ver al individuo como ser humano, no como enemigo político e ideológico. COCC AY Equipo No. 8 – Laicos Adultos; COCC AY Equipo # 9. Laicos Adultos; COCC AY Equipo No. 13 – Laicos Jóvenes; COCC AY Equipo No. 12 – Oblatas; COCC AY Curso Santiago; COCC AY Equipo No. 10 – Jóvenes 17.9.1969.

60 COCC AY Equipo No. 5 – Sacerdotes de las Diócesis de Pinar del Río, Matanzas y Cienfuegos; COCC AY Equipo No. 1 – Sacerdotes de la Capital 17.9.1969; COCC AY Equipo No. 2 – Sacerdotes de la Habana 17.9.1969; COCC AY Equipo No. 3 – Sacerdotes Campo-Habana 17.9.1969.

61 The role of women in religious orders in Cuba is concurrent with the strong tradition of Latin America for female religious attending communities, particularly in areas without clergy. Gaine 1991.

62 Un clima de amistad, comprensión y atención. - - Sembrándoles la semilla de la esperanza. COCC AY Equipo No. 7 – Religiosas de Obras Sociales 17.9.1969; COCC AY Equipo No. 6 – Religiosas del Interior 17.9.1969.

as shared values in joint service for the people.<sup>63</sup> Some of the sisters also represented continuity from a pre-revolutionary presence to the revolutionary reality: personal relations between sisters and leadership of the Cuban government, for instance, remained close despite changing policies on religion. As some of the public figures representing the revolution, among them Raúl Castro, had in their youth grown close to sisters, they remained in personal contact throughout the revolutionary era.<sup>64</sup>

Sisters demanded that clerics, religious orders and the laity cultivate a self-understanding of citizenry and participation in society and culture shared with non-Catholics and militant communists.<sup>65</sup> They also pointed out, poignantly, that in order for clergy and religious orders to maintain their credibility, they had to fully acknowledge the poverty already present in the everyday realities of the revolution and embrace it even in the most quotidian of acts and behavior. The sisters criticized their fellow Catholics for maintaining a sense of privilege and superiority, and they demanded more authenticity in daily life: “We must see ourselves as equals to them [the people] and, consequently, not accept privileges in queues, when they offer us a seat in the bus, and so on.”<sup>66</sup> The sisters’ message was echoed by seminarians, who pointed to the “self-denying” commitment of mindful Marxists to the “spirit of service,” and portrayed this as a lesson to be both appreciated and replicated by clergy and laity alike. Correspondingly, sisters also highlighted the value of charitable pastoral work for non-Catholics as an example of altruism in the revolutionary reality.<sup>67</sup>

Clergy also acknowledged the opportunities for participation provided by the revolution’s daily practices and performances. New social phenomena, such as state-controlled centers of work and the formation of long queues at food stores and restaurants as a part of daily routines of Cubans, were recognized as sites in which one could offer a testimony of Christian life through active participation.<sup>68</sup> Although the clergy pointed out the instability of communities affected by migration and obligatory social service endured by citizens in the countryside, they also saw open doors for the Church in “the fears and hopes of the people, brought on by the new social structure,”<sup>69</sup> such as the declining economy and discontent with the management and leadership of the revolution. One specific occasion of encounter was identified in the archives of the Church<sup>70</sup>: as Cubans planning to leave the island approached the Church in the systematic organization of migration, in order to gather documentation on baptism, matrimony, and family relations kept in ecclesial records, the Church frequently came into contact with a large mass of Cubans possibly alienated from the revolution.

As priests sought points of encounter in relation to the hardships of the revolutionary process, a younger generation of theologians, seminarians from Havana’s national seminary,

63 For instance, COCC AY Equipo No. 7 – Religiosas de Obras Sociales 17.9.1969; COCC AY Equipo No. 6 – Religiosas del Interior 17.9.1969; Interview 13; Interview 14; Interview 15.

64 Interview 5; Interview 15.

65 COCC AY Equipo No. 14 – Religiosas de La Capital 17.9.1969.

66 Hemos de pensar que somos iguales que ellos y por tanto no aceptar los privilegios (en las colas, cuando nos ofrecen el asiento en el ómnibus, etc.) COCC AY Equipo No. 6 – Religiosas del Interior 17.9.1969.

67 COCC Equipo No. 11 – Seminaristas no teólogos; COCC AY Equipo No. 14 – Religiosas de la Capital.

68 COCC AY Equipo No. 3 – Sacerdotes Campo-Habana 17.9.1969.

69 COCC AY Equipo No. 5 – Sacerdotes de las Diócesis de Pinar del Río, Matanzas y Cienfuegos.

70 COCC AY Equipo No. 1 – Sacerdotes de la Capital 17.9.1969; Interview 9.

demanded authenticity from the Church itself. With intense passion, they called upon their superiors for “genuine commitment to people and society, not seeking political changes but true progress instead, by work [and] by sharing the vicissitudes and struggles of the people.” They called for completely new structures for inter-ecclesial work, “pulling the Church out of the sacristy” and into the surrounding society. This also entailed a realistic understanding of the laity’s experiences, struggles, and emotions. Ultimately, seminarians linked the impulse for renewal to strengthening the local church’s connection to global Catholicism and the socio-political changes of the 1960s in both hemispheric and global contexts.<sup>71</sup> Remarkably, seminarians were also the only group identifying devotion to *La Virgen de la Caridad* as a possible point of encounter between Catholics and revolutionaries.<sup>72</sup> In their vision, popular practices of devotion and institutional Catholic advocacy of Mary met in the cultural, historical relevance of the Virgin as Cuba’s patron saint—and through her intermediation, the shared experiences of Cubans from all sectors of society found resonance with each other.

Joining the call for authenticity, a particularly prophetic voice emerging during the reflection was that of the young Catholic laity. Younger members of the laity criticized both the clergy and pre-revolutionary generations of the laity for harboring fear and prejudice, behaving like “foreigners in our own country,” and rejecting coexistence and collaboration with non-Catholics to avoid any association with Marxism. What young people expected from the Church was commitment in the field, not criticism from the margins. From their own communities, they asked for active cooperation to facilitate progress without fear and prejudice.<sup>73</sup> While calling for profound renovations in the structures and vision of the Church, young laypeople ultimately urged a change in what they called “the chapel mentality”<sup>74</sup>—isolation within the churches without engaging with the realities of the streets.

Challenging priests to leave the churches both figuratively and concretely, branching out to have more contact with the streets and public spaces, including the general population, the great masses of those in the revolution, and not only believers, the young laity also wished to assume more responsibility in familiarizing priests with the prevailing social and secular realities and urged clerics to accept their knowledge on laical life in the revolution.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, laypeople chastised their peers for the same closed mindset: according to some of them, it was crucial “to pull the laypeople out of the sacristies, make them understand that their true mission is out there; that if they marginalize themselves, they betray their mission.”<sup>76</sup>

The shift in self-identification was expressed in radical terms by some of the laity as a shift of mindset “from *mentalidad gusana* to Christians.”<sup>77</sup> The choice of words carried a tone

71 Un compromiso genuino con el hombre y con la sociedad no buscando cambios políticos - - sino el desarrollo verdadero, mediante el trabajo [y] compartir las vicisitudes y dificultades del pueblo. - - Sacar la Iglesia de la sacristía. COCC AY Equipo No. 4 – Seminaristas teólogos; COCC AY Equipo No. 4 Seminaristas teólogos 16.9.1969.

72 COCC AY Equipo No. 4 – Seminaristas teólogos.

73 COCC AY Equipo No. 13 – Laicos jóvenes.

74 Mentalidad de capilla. COCC AY Grupo 13 – Laicos Jóvenes.

75 COCC AY Grupo 13 – Laicos Jóvenes.

76 Sacar a los laicos de las sacristías, hacerles comprender que su verdadera misión está fuera, que si ellos mismos se marginan están traicionando su misión. COCC AY Equipo 12 – Instituto Secular (oblatas).

77 COCC AY Equipo 12 – Instituto secular (oblatas) is among the few primary sources in which the term *gusano* appears in some form with an ecclesial connotation. In this document, *mentalidad gusana* is derived from *gusanos*, worms. It was a derogatory term used by the Cuban government of those accused of having betrayed the revolution,

of radicalism, as *gusano* was a term employed by Fidel Castro, one pertaining to popular idioms in reference to counterrevolutionaries and traitors as defined by the revolution, often particularly addressing Cubans in exile. Originally the word referred to the duffel bag with a tubular shape, used by many of the Cubans who were allowed to carry only one suitcase when leaving the island in the early stages of the revolution. Yet the term was also used by certain Cubans to express self-identification as opponents of Castro or the communist government.<sup>78</sup> Within the Church, the choice of words was remarkable: it was a point clearly made that the Church did not see itself as an opponent of the revolution and that it wanted others to see that it was not assuming any counterrevolutionary stances—the likes of which were identified and implied through the very choice of words by Catholics in alignment with the rhetoric of the revolution.

As has been suggest by Guerra, for instance, at times the use of the term *gusano* carried with it a sense of pride in claiming self-identification to the opposition of the revolution<sup>79</sup>; according to some of the laity, this was exactly the dimension of self-identification that the Church needed to rid itself of in order to further integrate into the new Cuban reality. The discourse on *gusanos* also offers an insight into the concept of persistence and how it was understood within the revolutionary reality. As de la Fuente argues, “persistence was defined as the no-revolution, social relations located outside the revolution.”<sup>80</sup> Following this argument, the new self-identification of Catholics proposed a move from outside of the revolutionary society into the shared sphere of revolutionary experience.

The younger generation proclaimed their Catholicism through authentic participation in society and a commitment to prevailing circumstances. “We are transcendently motivated in life,” they wrote as a reference to religious meaning-making in the revolution—and simultaneously showing they were open to accepting the prevailing socialist structures on the island.<sup>81</sup> Young laity also acknowledged the repercussions of openly professing both faith and their social commitment. Criticizing both the Church and the State, they claimed that in their sincere participation in everyday life, they were accused of being both too integrated into the revolution and of remaining “reactionaries” as Catholics within the revolutionary reality. They issued a call for active cooperation for social development, without conscious negation and isolation of the Church from the prevailing circumstances shared by all Cubans. According to them, the purpose of the Church was to serve with a positive vision in the face of hardship, while truly acknowledging and committing itself to the “moans of deprivation among Cubans.”<sup>82</sup>

Present in the reflection of both the clergy and laity was a striving for unity: cohesion of Catholics amongst themselves and in the face of the revolutionary reality. This entailed both the laity demonstrating their daily commitment to the Church as well as the clergy setting an example through their actions, words, and attitudes.<sup>83</sup> The ideal of unity derived from Medellín: from the shared responsibility of all Catholics to respond to the mission of the Church in the

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such as Cubans openly against the revolutionary politics and Cubans leaving the island. Guerra argues that the term was also employed as a title of self-identification by the opponents of the revolution. Guerra 2012, 198.

78 Conde 1999, 37–38; Uría 2011, 534; Guerra 2012, 198; Schmidt 2015, 213.

79 Guerra 2012, 198, 200–201.

80 de la Fuente 2019, 291.

81 Tenemos una motivación trascendente en la vida. COCC AY Equipo No. 13 – Laicos jóvenes.

82 COCC AY Equipo No. 13 – Laicos jóvenes.

83 COCC AY Equipo No. 5 – Sacerdotes de las Diócesis de Pinar del Río, Matanzas y Cienfuegos; COCC AY Equipo No. 4 – Seminaristas teólogos; COCC AY Conclusiones del segundo día.

contemporary context through coherence and self-identification as the People of God.<sup>84</sup> Through internal unity, Cuban Catholics were also striving to enforce their belonging in the revolutionary reality. Yet, some of the laypeople challenged the Church by asking how Catholics in Cuba were visibly setting themselves apart from the population: how the Church was manifesting its nature as a distinct faith-based community among Cubans.<sup>85</sup> As a response, clergy highlighted the theological dimension of freedom through discipleship: while aiming at rooting themselves deeply into the prevailing social structures, Cuban Catholics were inherently free from the temporary conditions and ideological premises of the revolution through the creation of mankind in God's image and the redemptory significance of faith for their soul.<sup>86</sup>

In this manner, the reflection revealed a remarkable difference by which the Church distinguished itself from the revolution, government, and Cuban State. Apart from ontological dissociation, in ecclesiology and practice the Cuban Church identified primarily as a community, but no longer through hierarchical structures or administrative bodies. The Church imposed no absolute authority or dictatorship over its members but was expected to facilitate kinship and equality instead. This sense of fraternity was relayed in the commentaries on the revolution as well: what both the clergy and laity saw, and wanted to see, as a distinct feature setting Catholics apart from the revolution was reciprocal exchange among members of the Church.

From the intense 16 days of reflection under the direction of Fernando Boulard emerged the commitment of the Cuban Church to creating a national plan for pastoral work.<sup>87</sup> The courses also set in motion a focus of the episcopate to re-estimate its theological foundation and principles of leadership. The summary called for a renewal of theological education and clerical identity, one better corresponding to the needs of the Cuban people and the post-Vatican II Church. In this vision, the laity was named to share the mission with the clergy, with active participation and true autonomy.<sup>88</sup>

Concluding the reflection, the Cuban Church took the framework offered by Boulard in the use of People of God as a theological paradigm and employed it to the Cuban context.<sup>89</sup> *Pueblo de Dios*, the People of God, became the transformative perspective for ecclesial life on the island, and it led the Church to declare service as its fundamental mission for Cuba. From an ecclesiological standpoint, behind the strong focus on community was the vision of the People of God as expressed by Vatican II and further emphasized in the Latin American reflection on conciliar theology.<sup>90</sup> Originating from the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* by Vatican II, the People of God constructed a vision of the Church as a community inclusive of all ranks of ecclesial life.<sup>91</sup> In Medellín, the concept was further developed in the distinctively Latin American context. It carried particular relevance for identifying with the poverty of peoples:

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84 COCC AY Conclusiones de las semanas de pastoral de Santiago y La Habana. Sept. 1969.

85 COCC AY Equipo No. 9 – Laicos adultos, otras diócesis.

86 COCC AY Conclusiones de las semanas de pastoral de Santiago y La Habana. Sept. 1969.

87 COCC AY Fernando Azcárate, Conferencia Episcopal de Cuba 3.10.1969.

88 COCC AY Conclusiones de las semanas de pastoral de Santiago de Cuba y La Habana. Sept. 1969. Canónigo Boulard. Resumen presentado a la Conferencia Episcopal para su estudio y redacción definitiva, 25.11.1969.

89 COCC AY Conferencia Episcopal de Cuba, Cursillo del Canónigo Boulard Pastoral – Preguntas a contestar por equipos.

90 Dussel 1991, 322–324; Bingemer 2016, 25.

91 LG.

since the majority of Latin Americans lived in abject poverty, the People of God were poor, and thus the Church was to identify as poor, too. This amounted to both material and spiritual poverty.

In Cuba, defining the Church as the People of God cast remarkable emphasis on the laity and connected the active agency of the laity to the search for the Kingdom of God in immanent reality.<sup>92</sup> As such, the perspective also entailed a significant shift in mentality: in the ecclesiology of People of God, the mission of the Church was defined as being in service of people, but not in a dominant role or in taking command of social progress.<sup>93</sup> According to priests in Pinar del Río, Matanzas, and Las Villas, the Church was to “serve how and where they the people want the Church to serve, not where and how the Church wants to serve.”<sup>94</sup> Yet the concept was also employed as a framework for connecting with the universality of the Catholic Church: under the concept, the local and global dimensions of Catholicism came together as the Cuban Church joined the global community, and the local communities on the island constructed a way to conceptualize their sense of unity. The framework provided by the People of God was therefore also a method for seeing the Church as a community of all Catholics: clerics, religious orders, and laity, united by the shared experience of life in revolutionary Cuba.

Shared experience transcended boundaries between the Church and the revolutionary world. In Santiago de Cuba, the reflection resulted in identifying a “shared search” in moments of hardship as common ground for Catholics and Marxists: the search for a common good, the welfare of the Cuban people, and the means to resolve social and economic problems faced by all Cubans despite ideologies.<sup>95</sup> In daily life, the late 1960s and early 1970s saw increasing dissatisfaction with the economic and material conditions on the island. A lack of alimentary products, household goods, and toiletries as well as the unavailability of maintenance services for domestic needs signaled the collapse of the Cuban economy.<sup>96</sup> Lay seminarians called these experiences “momentary losses of hope,” stemming from daily hardships, the search for meaning and purpose in an individual’s life in the revolution, and the disillusionment of Cubans with the State administration and leadership. By recognizing these hardships as a prevailing condition for all Cubans, the laity also expressed an imperative for the Church to accept and treat

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92 COCC AY Conclusiones del segundo día; COCC AY COCC AY Conclusiones de las semanas de pastoral de Santiago y La Habana. Sept. 1969; COCC AY Curso Santiago.

93 COCC AY Puntos de la Comisión de Conclusiones. Primer Día; COCC AY Equipo No. 9 – Laicos adultos, otras diócesis; COCC AY Curso Santiago.

94 Como quieran y donde quieran los hombres que ella sirva y no donde y como quiera ella servir. COCC AY Equipo No. 5 Sacerdotes de las Diócesis de Pinar del Río, Matanzas y Las Villas 16.9.1969.

95 COCC AY Curso de Santiago.

96 Pérez-Stable 2012, 101–102; Pérez 2015a, 271.

non-believers,<sup>97</sup> revolutionaries, with equal appreciation and respect<sup>98</sup>—thus also acknowledging the catalyzing role of the Church in generating polarization and tension in the revolutionary society.

The views represented a more direct reference to CELAM and Medellín. Notably, this discourse was largely omitted from the episcopate’s 1969 statements: in order to avoid criticizing the revolution, material scarcity was only referenced via the U.S. trade embargo. Yet, the internal discourse suggested the continental discourse on poverty in the Latin American Church translated into discussions on the conditions of poverty and struggle in Cuba and the presence of Catholics in sharing the struggle with all Cubans. The new discursive framework also helped the Cuban Church reflect upon its experiences of loss of both material resources and institutional privilege in the early stages of the revolution.

Although the summary expressed the Church’s social consciousness in the prevailing Cuban context, it carefully avoided political connotations and commitments. Likewise, the sharpest edges of critique by young theologians and laity were polished: the version admitted for further study by the bishops was a diplomatic version of the original discourse, from which more progressive social thought was also omitted. Although the omission was met with discontent by the working groups, it remained in the final conclusions. Demands for radical exchange with the revolutionary reality were replaced with a focus on internal development of the Church; open dialogue with Marxism was balanced by reinforcing evangelical testimony demonstrated through social participation. The criticism of the clergy’s disaffection from the lived realities was countered by a call for all Catholics to direct their attention to the grassroots level.

With this more concrete inclination towards the daily realities of Catholics, “shared suffering” before hardships of the revolutionary reality was discerned as a bridge from the Church to society, in which Catholics were to recognize the positive values manifested outside the Church and promote encounters with all Cubans in respectful dialogue. To this end, the Church should also commit itself to constructing a common good based on the Christian gospel—but not political ideas.<sup>99</sup> As the discourse suggests, in its interpretation of the Vatican II’s spirit of reconciliation between the Church and the modern world, the Cuban Church wavered indecisively between European methods of civilized, if estranged, dialogue with the world and the Latin American emphasis on concrete commitment in the world, with particular attention to lived experience, the life of the poor, and social justice.

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97 In the Cuban Catholic discourse on non-believers of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the influence of the Holy See’s Secretariat for Non-Believers echoed clearly. The Secretariat for Non-Believers was established in 1965 by Pope Paul VI and renamed the Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-Believers (*Pontificium consilium pro dialogo cum non credentibus*, PCDNC) in 1988. In 1993, the unit was merged into the Pontifical Council for Culture. In the late 1960s, the policy of the Secretariat guided the local churches to engage in dialogue with those in the periphery and to conduct intellectual analysis of atheism in the local context. For a discussion on the Secretariat’s vision of dialogue, see Fejérdy 2016, 313.

98 COCC AY Equipo # 9. Laicos Adultos; COCC AY Equipo No. 11 – Seminaristas no teólogos; COCC AY Equipo 10 – Laicos Jóvenes.

99 COCC AY Conclusiones de las semanas de pastoral de Santiago de Cuba y La Habana. Sept. 1969. Canónigo Boulard. Resumen presentado a la Conferencia Episcopal para su estudio y redacción definitiva. 25.11.1969.

## 2. Realities of the Streets

The focus on the revolutionary everyday impeded the Cuban Church from actively reflecting on what was to ensue in Latin America at the turn of the 1970s. A decade of political upheaval in Latin America saw coups, the rise of dictatorships, and totalitarianism.<sup>100</sup> Occurring simultaneously, and becoming intertwined via the social participation of the Church, Latin American Catholicism gained new global recognition through its post-conciliar interpretations of the role of the Church in contemporary Latin America, both providing ecclesial actors with more agency in Latin American societies and stemming from the Church's awakened social consciousness.<sup>101</sup> In 1971, Gustavo Gutiérrez published the foundational book *Teología de la liberación*, which came to mark a new perspective on theology and pastoral action in Latin America. Focus on the lived reality of the region, a commitment to the poor and oppressed, and a prophetic vision of the Church in service of liberation catalyzed a mass movement.<sup>102</sup> As liberation theology emerged as a new, prestigious framework for theological discussion in Latin America, it directed discussions towards social consciousness and greater participation.

Yet little of the socio-political atmosphere and theological discussion was mirrored in the Cuban Church. While the Catholic Church in several other countries either sided with or voiced resistance to State power and authority,<sup>103</sup> the Cuban Church carefully avoided public expressions of either solidarity with or rejection of such power and authority. This further underscored the mutual experience of distance of the Cuban Catholic community from the rest of Latin America: while priests, religious orders, and the laity in other countries engaged in social and political activism, their Cuban brothers and sisters focused on maintaining a balanced nonpolitical presence. The archival sources of the Catholic Church have very little to say about the Latin American political developments of the 1970s. The sources discuss the revolution and Catholicism primarily within the Cuban context, further mirroring and contributing to the experience of isolation of the Church from Latin American Catholicism.

On the island, the 1970s saw diversifying religious localization. Despite the government claiming the church building as the primarily site of religious activity, for most of the laity the home and familial life were the predominant loci for religiosity. The emphasis on domestic spheres of life paved the way to the privatization of religion: both ecclesial and domestic expressions of religiosity had become centered on spirituality and grassroots acts of charity. This represented another point of contradiction to the discourse on socially conscious Catholicism in the Latin America, further underscoring the theological and sociopolitical distance of Cuban Catholicism. Yet, these categories also became challenged in their own right: the attempt to contain religion as private was becoming increasingly contested by the presence of individual Catholics in society.

At the start of the 1970s, the revolutionary idealism and romanticism of the 1960s gave way to pragmatism. The turn of the 1970s saw mounting economic difficulties and, consequently, emerging criticism of the revolutionary process. As a result, the government directed the revolution towards more institutionalization, further enforcing State control of both public

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100 Ching, Buckley & Lozano-Alonso 2007, 239.

101 Carriquiry 2002, 221–227, 236.

102 See Gutiérrez 1971; Brady 2008, 161.

103 Miller 1991, 148–149.



and private lives, while strengthening and extending the role of the Communist Party.<sup>104</sup> As one of the signs of the growing institutionalization of the revolution, in the mid-1970s the Party held its first congress, in which Cuba was declared an atheist State; Fidel Castro became president and a new constitution was established. In working life, material incentives and wage differences were introduced; in society, mass organizations were introduced again as a means of institutional social control.<sup>105</sup>

In Cuban society, the early 1970s represented a period of repression.<sup>106</sup> In terms of Church–State dynamics, the Cuban police continued to regulate religious practices and practitioners.<sup>107</sup> Discriminatory designs were reinforced “by a schematic and excessively simplified assimilation of Marxism,” which in turn, as argued by Alonso Tejada, “has hindered the understanding of the cultural dimension of the religious phenomenon in all its plurality.”<sup>108</sup> According to Alonso Tejada, the revolution’s discriminatory policies were not established solely in the early 1960s but instead continued to evolve in the course of the 1970s.<sup>109</sup> In other areas of cultural and social life, *Quinquenio gris*, the five gray years from 1971 to 1976, saw particularly intense cultural suppression and state-imposed suppression of criticism, intellectual marginalization, and repression.<sup>110</sup> According to Bustamante, Cuban artists and intellectuals had employed rapprochement and integration as a means of self-preservation in the revolution, leading to strategic participation, even complicity, among artists.<sup>111</sup> In this regard, the arts may be seen as a field of culture with similar responses to the participation in and performance of the revolution as religion, balancing between independent expression, identity, and the norms imposed by the framework of the revolution both at the intersections and, simultaneously, within the multiple contours of the revolutionary reality.

The continuously restrictive environment towards religion in the revolution<sup>112</sup> contributed to the privatization of religion. At the grassroots level, the strong focus on individualism was, at times, a challenge for the clergy. Traditional forms of religious performance were declining and, with that, some of the clergy saw the decay of Christian morality. In Pinar del Río, a priest wrote down the following reflections on the daily life of the community he attended in 1970:

104 Pérez-Stable 1985, 292; Crahan 2008, 331; Pérez-Stable 2012, 104, 118.

105 Mesa-Lago 1978, 38–40, 44–49, 101; Pedraza 2007, 125–126; Schmidt 2015, 242.

106 Rojas 2019, 43.

107 de la Fuente 2001, 294–296.

108 Alonso Tejada 1999, 33.

109 Alonso Tejada 1999, 36–37, 44, 63–64.

110 Quiroga 2005, 31, 185; Padura Fuentes 2008, 348–349; Bustamante 2019.

111 Bustamante 2019.

112 Apart from Catholicism, revolutionary politics on religion in the early 1970s addressed also Afro-Cuban religious practices. Concurring with Catholic discourse on work and commitment to the revolutionary process, and the politics of the government to enforce revolutionary worldviews over religious thinking, Elizabeth Schwall discusses revolutionary visions on Afro-Cuban religious beliefs and practices and the commitment of practitioners to revolutionary work in her article *The Footsteps of Nieves Fresneda*, 2019. Schwall’s conclusions on the policies attempting to direct Afro-Cuban practitioners from religious beliefs to higher intellectual consciousness in the revolutionary ideology are remarkably similar to the visions imposed on Catholicism in the revolution. A particularly similar aspect is the individual work conducted by revolutionary officials to encourage believers to overcome religion as an obstacle for further growth in their personal and collective commitment to the revolutionary process. However, Schwall notes that Afro-Cuban practitioners were not discredited as workers on the basis of religious practices and that State officials recognized some for hosting religious faith and revolutionary ideas simultaneously. Schwall concludes that the rhetorical and political balancing act and the unfolding dynamics of the revolution and religion were particularly noteworthy in the broader cultural climate of the early 1970s. Schwall 2019.

We don't believe that the community is manifesting a spirit of service and poverty like the Gospel teaches, but one can appreciate certain acts of compassion for the neighbor that could have their foundation in the Gospel. Such as: neighbors help each other on quite many occasions; they suffer the pain together when someone they know dies; they come together to share many festivities; and so on, some other things in which one can, with careful attention, observe attitudes of Christian service.<sup>113</sup>

According to him, perceiving Christian attitudes among Cubans was harder than before. This opinion was echoed by the cleric's peers in Pinar del Río. While they acknowledged a steady increase in participation, they expressed concern for the decline in the laity's knowledge of Catholic doctrine. Some went so far as to question whether Catholic morality played any role in the new Cuban society any longer: they wanted to know if Christian values had been fully replaced by revolutionary, Marxist-Leninist ideals.<sup>114</sup>

These doubts coincided with the Sovietization of the revolution. In early the 1970s, Cuba sought models for economic and political organization from the Soviet Union, resulting in the institutionalization of the revolution and increased authority of the Communist Party.<sup>115</sup> The decade's reinforced emphasis on Marxist-Leninist ideology influenced Cuban society thoroughly. From a Catholic perspective, the effects were particularly dramatic in the production of materialistic atheism as the norm in education and professional priorities. According to Rafael Rojas, in the 1970s "in elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels of education, culture, the arts, the ethnic, religious and sexual relations, Cubans contended with the uncritical assimilation of Soviet social scientific models, grounded in atheist, materialist, anthropological, macho and homophobic references."<sup>116</sup>

In the early 1970s, education as a revolutionary process became a defining aspect of the Catholic lifestyle in Cuban society. In 1971, the National Educational and Cultural Congress positively assessed the junctions of social construction with the Catholic Church, yet it upheld the revolution's policy on the complete separation of Church and State with no support nor encouragement for any religion or any favors requested by the Church.<sup>117</sup> The same year, the professional trajectories of young Catholic adults experienced a dramatic change, as standards for political evaluation were established for university students and higher education was defined as the right of revolutionaries only. Both old and new students were evaluated on their moral conditions and commitment to the revolutionary process.<sup>118</sup>

Simultaneously with the reinforced repression and discriminatory policies in Cuban society, in 1970 the community centered at the Cathedral of Pinar del Río witnessed an increase of participants in the annual event in which the laity presided over the recitation of the rosary, delivered lectures and meditations, and led the singing of songs.<sup>119</sup> Additionally, the increased

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113 No creemos que la comunidad esté manifestando su espíritu de servicio y pobreza como lo enseña el Evangelio, pero sí se puede apreciar ciertos hechos de compasión del prójimo que pueden tener su fundamento en el Evangelio. Tales como: los vecinos se ayudan mutuamente en bastantes ocasiones; se sufre el dolor juntos cuando muere un conocido; comparten unidos muchas festividades, y así, algunas otras cosas, que si se pone atención, se pueden observar actitudes de servicio cristiano. ACOPR Espiritualidad, Pinar del Río, 9.8.1970.

114 ACOPR Espiritualidad, Pinar del Río, 9.8.1970.

115 Mesa-Lago 1978, 112–115; Pérez-Stable 2012, 104.

116 Rojas 2019, 43.

117 Crahan 1985.

118 Mesa-Lago 1978, 105.

119 ACOPR Espiritualidad, Pinar del Río, 9.8.1970.

participation included youth meetings each Sunday, a group of mothers convening on Saturdays, and a group of married couples meeting weekly to study the Bible and liturgy and discuss their present thoughts and concerns in a spiritual light.<sup>120</sup> Similar experiences were recounted elsewhere on the island: in gradual steps, ecclesial life began to stabilize with increased participation.<sup>121</sup>

Correspondingly, it was also becoming a priority for the Church to portray lay Catholics as accommodating members of society, whose religious convictions were not an obstacle to participation in work and social life. In fact, this was considered an instrumental opening for the Church: a window into the revolutionary reality that the Church strived to keep open.<sup>122</sup> At the same time, changes in the episcopate brought forward more socially progressive visions and opened up new channels for dialogue with the revolutionary society.<sup>123</sup> After the resignation of Evelio Díaz Cía, Francisco Oves was appointed archbishop of Havana in 1970. The following year, Fernando Ramón Prego Casal succeeded Alfredo Muller as the bishop of the Diocese of Cienfuegos.<sup>124</sup>

Along with the changes in the hierarchy, new landscapes of thought were also introduced and constructed within ecclesial communities. In Pinar del Río, a congregational study group began to study ideas of atheism in Europe, with a particular focus on the Netherlands.<sup>125</sup> Some members also issued calls for increased self-criticism of Catholics and their attitudes towards modern ideologies. New currents of thought were reinforced through emphasis on Vatican II. Liturgical reform in particular was receiving enthusiastic support from both the clergy and laity. According to many priests, the new liturgical innovations introduced by Vatican II had brought the laity a renewed sense of participation.<sup>126</sup> Yet that was not the case for everyone: archival sources also trace the disappointments of some clergy that local laypeople were not showing much interest in the council. While clergy and active laity had “occasionally tried to teach people” about the council, “they haven’t responded in a positive manner.”<sup>127</sup>

In Pinar del Río, an overarching sense in ecclesial life was the demand for religious education of the laity, both adolescent and adult. Catechesis was becoming a central focus of activities since it served several purposes for the Church in Cuban reality. Not only did the study of the foundations of faith serve to reinforce an awareness of religiosity and Catholic identity, catechesis as a domain also corresponded to the limitations of daily work experienced by the Church. As an educational activity organized entirely within the Church, with its contents not directly discussing social or political currents, catechesis could be developed without interference from the State. It was thus an opening readily explored by the Church.

120 ACOPR Apostolado, Pinar del Río 9.8.1970.

121 Interview 20.

122 ACOPR Consejo Parroquial de Pastoral, Pinar del Río 9.8.1970; ACOPR Liturgia, Pinar del Río 9.8.1970.

123 Alonso Tejada 1999, 34.

124 See Appendix 1.

125 Such focus had been strongly proposed by Vatican II and the Holy See’s *Ostpolitik*. In this sense, the Cuban attempts to engage in constructive analysis and dialogue with Marxism followed the trends and guidelines of global Catholicism.

126 ACOPR Liturgia, Pinar del Río 9.8.1970.

127 En ocasiones se ha tratado de enseñar el pueblo, pero no ha respondido positivamente. ACOPR Liturgia, Pinar del Río 9.8.1970.

Simultaneously with the emphasis on formation, the Church acknowledged the demand for consistency and cohesive frameworks for pastoral action. Nationally, diocesan groups and local communities expressed a need for, among other things, uniform materials for the catechism and joint teaching methods for all dioceses. At the grassroots level, such efforts varied greatly at times: in compensation for material scarcity, communities had developed a range of local approaches and resources to catechism and teaching, utilizing materials only partially or using their own methods. Some of the materials utilized were outdated in their theology and unapproved by the clergy—they certainly did not improve the recognition of conciliar theology and practices and were thus seen as hindering changes in ecclesial mentality.<sup>128</sup>

The privatization of religion contributed to the deconstruction of monolithic Catholic culture in Cuba. Whereas the prerevolutionary era had been marked by a strong presence of Catholic tradition and cultural representations of historical Catholicism, including symbols and traditions that were understood as intrinsic elements of *la cubanidad*, the 1970s began to show the revolution's legacy in deconstructing publicly visible Catholic cultural elements and replacing them with new revolutionary imaginary. The revolution seemed to be the predominant cultural framework that formed a shared legacy for the nation, and it did not include established, publicly expressed religion in its representations.

Yet, it is also crucial to note that the individualization and privatization of religion, with the deconstruction of the historically institutional structures and ideals of Catholic participation, in fact gave more agency to people in their everyday realities. With the privatization of religion, with the move from churches into Cuban homes, it was only a short distance to the decentralization of hierarchical power. As such traditional structures as Catholic organizations and mass movements began to dissolve, more agency was rendered to the grassroots level. From the episcopal hierarchy, ecclesial structures began to be transformed in favor of more autonomy for clergy and laity in their daily contexts.

This shift revealed an intriguing paradox in Church–State dynamics and the revolutionary leadership's attempt to contain and direct religiosity. Although revolutionary culture aimed at dictating the frameworks of religion by restraining it to the domestic sphere, it was in fact the domestic sphere that possessed the agency and autonomy to conserve and reproduce religiosity. Through everyday expressions and domestic acts of religiosity, the autonomy of individuals also began to supersede the need for institutional instruction: at home, religion was not always practiced and faith expressed in manners approved of or instructed by the Church. In fact, the diminishing opportunities of the Church to systematically educate laypeople also created more space and fluidity for individual expressions.

In daily realities, the frameworks of religiosity in the revolution were also contested and challenged. On the level of practice and daily life, expressions of Catholicism did not follow the consolidated patterns of accepted behavior. Action was taken on the streets before it was authorized by either the Church or the State: for instance, in eastern Cuba, in the town of Holguín, an effigy of the Virgin Mary was brought out into the streets and carried around neighborhoods in a procession without authorization from the government or local authorities.<sup>129</sup> Initiated by local priests and the laity to boost the spirit of the local Catholic community, the

128 ACOPR Catequesis, Pinar del Río 9.8.1970.

129 Interview 23; Interview 24; Interview 26.

procession was executed as a spontaneous act without the structures of the clerical hierarchy having approved of it or supported it. At the time, public processions were banned by the government; yet oral histories recollect thousands of *holguineros*, with both Catholics and non-Catholics joining the procession, amazed at seeing the Virgin in public after many years and flocking into the streets of the town to follow her.<sup>130</sup> With the Virgin and her local devotees, what was deemed too risky or politically sensitive by ecclesial authorities was already being appropriated by locals marching in the streets.

The scholar of histories of lived religion Robert Orsi has referred to the pulse of everyday religious activities and spirituality of ordinary life as “theologies of the street.”<sup>131</sup> In the case of Cuba, the idea has been introduced and further discussed by Jalane D. Schmidt in her work on the Virgin of Charity in popular expressions in Cuban history.<sup>132</sup> Central to both works is the claim that theology is crafted and religiosity negotiated in a multitude of ways: as this study further argues, both institutional and unofficial, established, and newly emerging expressions contributed to the way religion was perceived and received in revolutionary Cuba.

As both the written and oral sources of this study suggest, in the mid-1970s Cuba theologies of the everyday became visible with spontaneous processions of the Virgin through towns, study groups convening in churches, and neighbors supporting each other’s small expressions of religiosity in local communities. During the years of severe cultural repression and reinforced discriminatory policies against religion, meanings were made and lives lived by Catholics through concrete acts in the intertwining spheres of the religious and revolutionary mindsets—and through these everyday expressions, religiosity penetrated public space and revolutionary spheres, although as an undesirable and publicly unacknowledged development. Life and theology on the streets, at the intersection of religious and revolutionary convictions, advanced without permission from either the Church or the State.

The boundaries of both the Church and the revolution were contested in everyday interactions between Catholics and communists. Through these encounters of individuals and communities, a persistent question began to emerge in the theologies of the streets of the late 1970s: Were Catholics and revolutionaries truly separated from each other, and should there even exist such a strict division? Human experience, the life of the streets, was proving more multifaceted than institutionally established binaries. While the institutional church remained marginalized in revolutionary society and written out of the grand narrative of the revolution, pockets of encounter and micronarratives nonetheless contributed to a more dynamic exchange amongst Cubans in their daily lives. Existing between churches and homes were the streets and other public spaces, with the domestic sphere providing a context for peer participation. Correspondingly, positioned at the intersection of the institutional church and individual Cubans with their marginalized, domestic forms of religious expression was the public sphere, which Catholics participated in as Cuban citizens. In this space, lay Catholics generated contestation to established binaries within both the Church and the revolution.

130 Interview 4; Interview 23; Interview 24; Interview 26.

131 For Orsi’s theoretical framework and a discussion on the theologies of the street and street theologians, see Orsi 2010.

132 See Schmidt 2015.

The new openings in informal social relations were a result of gradual steps taken in the self-understanding of the Church regarding its role in Cuba. Already in 1969, testimony had been transcribed as a necessary state of living for Cuban Catholics in the revolutionary reality:

We recognize that the contemporary Cuban society demands from all Christians a testimony of life, of active presence and love with true loyalty to the message of Christ, which is not only a doctrine but a historical performance and radicalism of God's plans about the salvation of the humankind.<sup>133</sup>

Testimony was manifested in, for instance, a spirit of love, cordial reception, altruistic service, and a sincerity of encounters.<sup>134</sup> Yet, the new theologies of the 1970s contributed to the transformation of testimony from spiritual presence to concrete action, which also contributed to the changing ideal of lay participation. Particularly central to the shift was the exchange between polarized groups of people occurring in quotidian circumstances, such as workplaces, as shared environments for Cuban adults. Cubans of opposing ideologies and lifestyles came together in such jobs as work in factories, laboratories, and centers of manual labor, spaces where Catholics could profess their faith to others by their mere presence.

The episcopal hierarchy was aware of the exchanges that took place in places of work, and it sought to use these encounters to improve the credibility and public image of the Church. As instructed by the episcopate and clergy, lay Catholics were to maintain and offer “a testimony of life” at the most colloquial level of encounter in their daily tasks. They were to fulfill their duties as Cubans—duties as a worker, a member of society, a citizens—yet without renouncing their identities as Catholics.<sup>135</sup> This vision was echoed by young laity, who emphasized exemplary participation and the execution of duties in society as a moral obligation for Catholics.<sup>136</sup> By doing so, laypeople offered a solemn testimony of their Catholic faith through daily life, participation, and responsibilities.

Church authorities viewed lay Catholics at workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods as an integrated minority who would “leaven the meal”<sup>137</sup> from within. The often-repeated metaphor was derived from the Bible: the parable of Jesus in which He said that the Kingdom of God was like leaven; when a small amount of it is added to a meal, it will leaven the meal in its entirety.<sup>138</sup> The frequent use of the expression in the archival sources suggests it was a shared metaphor for clergy, religious orders, and laity alike, opening an intriguing perspective into how they saw the role of laypeople in Cuban society: a minority integrated into the daily realities could ideally serve as a force of change from within. Catholics were the “salt seasoning in the entire dough,” and for that reason their personal life, conduct, and social relations were considered a necessary testimony in the revolutionary reality.<sup>139</sup> This also echoed the emphasis of the People of God,

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133 Reconocemos que la sociedad actual de Cuba exige de todos los cristianos un testimonio de la vida, de presencia activa y de amor en una auténtica lealtad al mensaje de Cristo, que no es sólo una doctrina sino una práctica histórica y dramática de los planes de Dios con respecto a la salvación del hombre. COCC AY Curso Santiago.

134 COCC AY Conclusiones del segundo día; Interview 22.

135 Interview 2; Interview 4; Interview 5; Interview 23; Interview 24; Interview 25; Interview 26; Interview 30; Interview 31.

136 COCC AY Grupo 13 – Laicos Jóvenes.

137 For instance, COCC AY Equipo No. 3 Clero Habana – Campo; COCC AY Grupo 1 – Sacerdotes de la capital.

138 The Parable of the Leaven, Luke 13: 20–21: “And again He said, ‘To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened’.”

139 COCC AY Equipo No. 1 – Sacerdotes de la Capital.

and the reinforced agency of the laity in the Cuban context, inspired by both Vatican II and Medellín.

At the same time, the episcopate and clergy highlighted the responsibility of the laity to publicly portray Catholicism in a credible, responsible manner. Hoping to project a vision of Catholicism through obedience and fulfillment of civic duties, they encouraged students to strive for honesty in their studies, parents to take responsibility for their children, professionals to improve their competency, and neighbors to assure their peers of their availability for cooperation.<sup>140</sup> Through these examples, Catholic citizenry were becoming intertwined with and permeating the revolutionary reality. Central to the exchange was the experience of a shared national identity, *la cubanidad*, as the common denominator. In the era of revolutionary institutionalization, the notion of a shared citizenry between Catholics and communists stood in juxtaposition with the binaries presented in the social frameworks for a revolutionary lifestyle. As such, it challenged the revolution's definition of normative citizenry through loyalty to the revolution's ideology, without yielding to Marxism, yet attached to the requirement for loyalty to society and *la patria*.

The Cuban episcopate also emphasized work as a dimension of faith: for Catholics, work served as an act of spirituality, helping construct the common good and a transcendent kingdom in temporal circumstances.<sup>141</sup> In Havana, priests discussed the instrumental nature of labor in further detail, identifying it as a bridge from Church to society and a solemn testimony of the laity's commitment to both ecclesial and revolutionary participation. Most importantly, through labor the laity offered the surrounding society an example of ideal citizenry and commitment to faith. Labor was *testimonio* in action, manifested in daily realities and the everyday course of life.<sup>142</sup>

Work also served to portray the Christian spirit of service and solidarity in immanent reality. Through active participation, laypeople would promote "not only economic progress of the country but also to integral development of their Cuban brothers and sisters."<sup>143</sup> Through this exchange, laypeople saw work as both a spiritual exercise and an exercise of commitment to the prevailing reality.<sup>144</sup> In their daily work, Cuban Catholics also came to encounter not only the fulfillment of their individual potential but also Christ the Worker through a personal, self-sacrificing search for common good:

A true appreciation of work will lead to individuals encountering in it their fulfillment as a person, their participation in the development of society, a site of communication and solidarity with brothers and sisters, a means to achieve wellbeing for their family, and above all, participation in the work of creation by God. -- Christians, in addition to these aspects, must encounter through work the spirituality of their communion with Christ the Worker, as well as with their human brothers and sisters, and a means to evangelization and realization of communion with non-believers.<sup>145</sup>

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140 COCC AY Grupo 9 Laicos adultos.

141 Comunicado 10.4.1969.

142 COCC AY Grupo 1 – Sacerdotes de la capital: COCC AY Curso de Santiago.

143 No sólo al desarrollo económico del país sino al desarrollo integral de sus hermanos cubanos. COCC AY Equipo 12 – Instituto secular (oblatas).

144 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Laicado, 312 Conciencia identidad cubana.

145 Una verdadera valoración del trabajo llevaría al hombre a encontrar en él, su realización como persona, su participación en el desarrollo de la sociedad, el lugar de la comunicación y la solidaridad con sus hermanos, el medio para lograr el bienestar de su familia, y sobre todo, la participación en la obra creadora de Dios. - - Los cristianos además de estas valoraciones, deben encontrar en el trabajo la espiritualidad de su comunión con Cristo

Remarkably, this vision of labor resonated with the late 1960s revolutionary emphasis on work as a fulfillment of *conciencia*, a revolutionary consciousness and ethic. The rhetoric of heroism, sacrifice, and dedication had prepared the ground of moral incentives for a commitment to labor discipline for the revolutionary vanguard. Will and dedication were laid out as ideals for workers, recapturing the spirit of the glorified guerrilla warfare. Despite these ideals, the average workers were progressively becoming demoralized by low wages, a lack of meaning in labor performance, and a lack of consumer goods and services.<sup>146</sup> This comparison clearly suggests that the ideal of Catholic commitment to work mirrored the revolutionary ethos and ideal of labor as a fulfillment of duty to the fatherland. Yet, it added a distinctively Christian dimension to understanding work as a spiritual exercise in imitation of *Cristo Trabajador*, Christ the Worker, which as a concept alluded to liberation theology and created an even more complex reading of the Cuban discourse on the meaning and significance of work both within and for the revolution.

In addition to the everyday theology of labor, Catholics in state-run workplaces fulfilled a concrete role of representation and presence. At work, where absenteeism ruled,<sup>147</sup> laypeople were portrayed as the “leaven, salt, and light” of Cuban society through their dedication to work.<sup>148</sup> Where Cuban Catholics remained a daily presence in workplaces, schools, and social spheres, they contested the unilateral vision of the revolutionary nation by their very presence. By the very manner in which revolutionary policies had contributed to the privatization of religion and the exclusion of both religious discourse and practices from the public sphere, religion in fact became present at sites from which the government wished to erase it—schools, universities, workplaces, and hospitals—all places where Catholics countered the narrative of religiosity disappearing from State operations.

Through this exchange, the presence of Catholics at contested sites of revolutionary and religious performance became transformed into a testimony of faith, a testimony of quotidian life,<sup>149</sup> which was publicly professed and proclaimed. At these sites of encounter, through the overlapping religious and revolutionary spheres of *la cubanidad*, religion both remained a reality rooted in and stemming from the revolutionary context, just as Catholicism remained the context in which the revolution became rooted and grew. As argued by Orsi, in this intertwining, overlapping sphere of the everyday of Catholics, religious life “was experienced in the same way and, in the same places, and with the same responsibilities and frustrations as these other aspects of their lives.”<sup>150</sup>

The meanings given to work as a shared Cuban experience provide a new perspective onto Catholic presence and participation in the revolutionary reality. As individual Catholics, clergy, and the laity alike experienced the revolution in their daily realities, the boundaries between religious and revolutionary became transparent. Understanding grew via encounter and

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trabajador y con sus hermanos hombres y un medio de evangelizar y de realizar la comunión con los no creyentes. AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Trabajadores, J–1–2 P. 34–35. Valoración trabajo.

146 Fagen 1969, 140–143; Pérez-Stable 2012, 99; Pérez 2015a, 270, 273.

147 Pérez-Stable 2012, 102; Pérez 2015a, 273.

148 *Fermento, sal y luz*. COCC AY Curso de Santiago.

149 Un testimonio de la vida cotidiana. Interview 23.

150 Orsi 2010, 226. See also Orsi 2003 discussing the overlapping and intertwining sacred spaces in other spatial presences in human life and culture, such as homes, streets, and workplaces.



exchange, and the irreconcilable gap between the Church and the revolution was bridged individual by individual. Tolerance and boundaries of inclusion were tested and broken down in workplaces. Gradual change was occurring in the interstices of the streets and the churches, at the intersections of everyday life, social norms, and institutional practices. Most importantly, change began to occur at the sites where everyday realities went beyond doctrine and established paradigms.

Part of Catholic testimony was also accepting hardships encountered in the quotidian, such as a lack of alimentary products, with a sense of serenity, and thus ultimately accounting for such challenges as a part of divine providence upon human courses of life. Nevertheless, serenity did not amount to indifference or stagnation: laypeople were also expected to continue “fostering a critical spirit at unjust elements.”<sup>151</sup> At the same time, they were to avoid “useless complaining” and focus on serving both the Church and the fatherland through the daily course of life. In this way, they could maintain credibility and make the most out of the opportunities, though admittedly few, to promote justice and decency in civic life.<sup>152</sup>

The discourse on Christian morality mirrored the revolutionary vision on individual morality in service of the State. The Catholic interpretation also offered an alternative to the revolution’s claim for supreme moral legitimacy. In morally compromising situations, laypeople urged themselves to put a priority on Christian codes of moral conduct. If this equaled a rejection of revolutionary ideals, laypeople themselves discussed candidly the risks of publicly identifying with the Church and expressions of religiosity in the public revolutionary consciousness. This was most apparent with situations in which lay individuals found their moral compass compromised by diverging norms of the revolution and Christianity.<sup>153</sup> Implicitly inscribed in this code of conduct was criticism of what was perceived as immoral in the revolution. Yet at the same time, the intra-ecclesial requirements of moral solidarity echoed the juxtapositions and binaries created by the revolution’s all-consuming discourse on unconditional compliance with the state-imposed morality and consciousness. In lay Catholic life as well, ideals and morals came into a conflict with the daily reality and individual trajectories of values, actions, and interpersonal relations.

Further depicting the existing dichotomies, *testimonio de la vida* was defined by the Communist Party as proselytism on the individual level: the everyday encounters and exchanges by Catholics in their daily lives aimed to project religiosity upon their revolutionary peers.<sup>154</sup> Adopting a similar approach, the Party urged militant communists to pursue “individual work with believers”:<sup>155</sup> to foster individual encounters with religious Cubans with the aim of converting them to the Marxist-Leninist perception of humanity, science, and the revolution. Yet, it was exactly the nature of individual encounters that paved the way for mutual recognition and tolerance. In this regard, the narratives imposed by the government on the revolutionary process did not straightforwardly align with revolutionary expressions on the streets.

These visions reflect an understanding that even in the institutionally established framework of Church–State relations, theology and religious acts were not always executed as a top-

151 COCC AY Grupo 8 – Laicos adultos; COCC AY Grupo 9 Laicos adultos.

152 COCC AY Grupo 8 – Laicos adultos; COCC AY Grupo 9 Laicos adultos.

153 COCC AY Equipo 12 – Instituto secular (oblatas).

154 AHAH Arzobispado Material de Estudio.

155 *Trabajo individual con creyentes*, AHAH Arzobispado Material de Estudio.

down process from the institutional church to the people. On the streets, people owned their agency in expressions and acts of religiosity, which did not always accord with the frameworks and boundaries set by institutions, neither the Church nor the revolution. As such, they also contributed to the changing ideal of *testimonio de la vida* from a silent act of perseverance to one of increasing agency: in the quotidian courses of people's lives,<sup>156</sup> testimonies were not only given by one's presence, but by words, actions, attitudes, and emotions as well.

As a whole, the discourse on lay participation and individual religiosity in revolutionary society shows how, in the course of the 1970s, the reality was becoming more complex and messy for both Catholic and the revolutionary world on the island—and the intersection of the two was where theologies and revolutions of the streets were pronounced through concrete acts in the everyday. It was on the streets, in homes and neighborhoods, and at workplaces where these categories were becoming blurred and intertwined, simultaneously experienced as both Catholic and revolutionary, and ultimately Cuban, lives.

### 3. The Seminary as a Site of Encounter

As the Cuban Church assessed its resources for pastoral work and recognized the need for radical restructuring, it also faced a severe, concrete crisis among its ranks: where to find new priests? The expulsion of foreign clergy and religious orders in 1961 had left the Church with a constant shortage of human resources. As time passed, the number of Cuban clergy had continued to decline without new clergy either being ordained in sufficient numbers or entering the island from Europe.

Further contributing to the lack of priests was the considerable number of seminarians sent away from the island by the Church in the early 1960s. In the messy phase of the revolution's early days,<sup>157</sup> both clergy and seminarians had been sent away as a measure of precaution: to secure the continuity of the seminary for the intermediate period, and to bring them back once the fate of the revolution was decided.<sup>158</sup> At the heart of the decision had been uncertainty about the future of the revolution:

When the revolution triumphed, they thought that it was not going to be much of a thing, and thus they sent almost all seminarians to conclude their studies in Rome, because they thought that in a few months, a few years, they would return. - - So, it was then another problem: how to return.<sup>159</sup>

According to documents in the Archive of the Seminary of *San Carlos y San Ambrosio*, 35 seminarians left Cuba between the end of the academic year of 1959–1960 and the first semester of 1960–1961, while 105 continued their studies in Cuba.<sup>160</sup> The majority of those sent abroad studied in Italy, Spain and the United States, some also in Canada.<sup>161</sup> Provided for by the global

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156 A theoretical reference to studying the processes of change and changelessness in the daily existence of the people in Cuba's history, with a particular focus on the nineteenth century, is provided by Louis Pérez Jr. See Pérez 2015b.

157 Pérez 2015a, 266–267.

158 Interview 3; Interview 4; Interview 11; Interview 24.

159 Cuando triunfó la Revolución, se pensó que no iba a ser una cosa, entonces casi todos los seminaristas los mandaron a terminar sus estudios en Roma, porque pensaban que dentro de unos meses, unos años, regresaban otra vez. - - Pues, entonces es el otro problema, cómo se regresa. Interview 11.

160 SSCSA LM Antiguos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso de 1960 a 1961.

161 COCC CP Prensa Latina / Jaime Ortega Alamino 26.12.1981; Interview 4.

structure and reach of the Catholic Church, seminarians had been assigned to conclude their studies in other countries and expected to return to Cuba once the transitional period of the revolution had passed or the revolutionary rule had been subverted as a temporary event. While waiting for the times to change, some of the Cubans entering the seminary in the early 1960s completed all of their studies outside the island.<sup>162</sup>

The stabilization and longevity of the revolution, together with the collapse of Church–State cordiality, had dramatically changed the plans of both the seminarians abroad as well as the home communities counting on their return. By the time most of the seminarians abroad had finished their studies in the mid-1960s, they were no longer allowed by the government to return to Cuba or had to wait for conditions enabling their return. Some seminarians did not want to return and were assigned to serve the Church in their new countries. Others were eager, even desperate, to enter Cuba again: to be where the future of the Cuban Church was determined, or to take part in the reality of the Church in Cuba—or to simply come back home to their families and communities.<sup>163</sup>

For those returning, whether ordained before their arrival or still officially categorized as seminarians, the process included messy alternative routes mediated by the Holy See and the apostolic nuncio in Cuba, including the participation of third-party embassies and nunciatures in Europe, sometimes resulting in unofficial and unauthorized arrivals on the island. Such priests made their way back through informal, unofficial channels, such as visiting family members with ailing health or simply refusing to leave, casually moving into work in their home communities. In these cases, the process was carefully planned, as some of the priests were first ordained into the ministry abroad so as not to draw unwanted attention to their new role in the Church in Cuba. In some cases, the ordination of Cuban priests was also intermediated by Zacchi.<sup>164</sup> After the first messy years, in 1963 ten recently graduated theologians had already been marked as returned via official procedure by the Ministry of Foreign Relations, and 18 more were expected to make their way back to Cuba with State permission.<sup>165</sup>

Those who managed to return still did not erase the problem of an insufficient number of priests. Their return was more significant for the human resources they brought back with them: the global exchange of ideas and perspectives, and a new vision on Cuba acquired through geographical and cultural distance to both the revolution and the Cuban Church. Yet the issue remained: in order to secure vitality and progress, the Church was in need of new Cuban clergy. Since foreign clergy were not allowed to freely enter Cuba, the ordination of Cuban priests was the primary method for increasing the number of clergy.<sup>166</sup> The laity, too, saw a decline: already in 1965, Havana’s lay leaders had noted a decrease in vocations with respect to the ordained ministry and the need to recruit new seminarians.<sup>167</sup> For this purpose, the continuity and vitality of Catholic seminaries in Cuba was crucial for recovering from the lack of priests and fostering new generations of native clergy.

162 COCC CP Prensa Latina / Jaime Ortega Alamino 26.12.1981; Interview 4; Interview 24.

163 FF Miguel A. Loredó; Interview 3; Interview 7; Interview 24.

164 FF Miguel A. Loredó; Interview 7; Interview 24; Uría 2011, 511–512, 541.

165 ACMINREX SS Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores to Mons. César Zacchi 4.7.1963.

166 Interview 3.

167 AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Enrique Pérez Serantes 25.11.1965.

In the 1970s, two seminaries resumed work in Cuba. The interdiocesan seminary *San Carlos y San Ambrosio* operated in Havana as the primary provider of education for future clergy nationwide.<sup>168</sup> In Santiago de Cuba, *Seminario Menor* prepared aspirants locally for admission to *San Carlos y San Ambrosio*.<sup>169</sup> Generally, the late 1960s and early 1970s were considered a difficult time for the seminary. A lack of professors and of material resources had left a tangible mark on the everyday life of the seminary, which had also been made to move its premises to a less suitable environment in 1965.<sup>170</sup> The conditions had severed the course of studies in the seminary and resulted in the “insufficient and unstable spiritual guidance” of seminarians.<sup>171</sup>

In the 1970s, the number of seminarians in Cuba reached its all-time low. While the number of seminarians continuing their studies recovered from the drop in the early years of the decade to a steady group of 50–60 students by mid-decade, in 1979 the numbers reached a new low, with barely 40 seminarians actively pursuing studies at *San Carlos y San Ambrosio*.<sup>172</sup> When considering the number of entries by new seminarians, the drop was ever more dramatic: whereas in 1970 a total of 17 seminarians began their studies, a steady decline throughout the decade resulted in notable low points, such as the year 1978, when only two new seminarians entered the institute.<sup>173</sup>

At the end of the 1970s, there were 221 priests in Cuba, 137 of them Cuban by nationality. Between 1970 and 1978, 82 new priests were ordained. In 1980, there was one priest for every 45,248 citizens.<sup>174</sup> It is important to note that the Cuban Church was not alone in experiencing a declining number of clergy: already from the 1950s onwards, a collective concern for the Catholic Church in Latin America had been the significant decline in pastoral vocations.<sup>175</sup> In Cuba, the trend affecting the Latin American Church encountered the challenging context of the revolution, with nearly fatal results. As the continental crisis reached its pinnacle in the 1970s, Cuba served as a warning example of the development. As a sign of this development, representatives from CELAM’s Department of Vocations and Ministries gathered for the regional meeting for Central America and the Caribbean in Cuba to discuss the critical state of vocations in the region.<sup>176</sup>

168 For photographic evidence of the archival site of *Seminario San Carlos y San Ambrosio*, see Appendix 2, pictures 4 and 5.

169 AHAH Arzobispado Material de Estudio.

170 Interview 1; Interview 3.

171 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Vocaciones y seminarios.

172 SSCSA LM Antiguos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1971–1972; SSCSA Antiguos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1972–1973; SSCSA Antiguos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1973–1974; SSCSA Antiguos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1974–1975; SSCSA Antiguos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1975–1976; SSCSA Antiguos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1976–1977; SSCSA Antiguos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1977–1978; SSCSA Antiguos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1978–1979; SSCSA LM Antiguos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1979–1980.

173 SSCSA Nuevos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1970–1971; SSCSA Nuevos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1971–1972; SSCSA Nuevos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1972–1973; SSCSA Nuevos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1973–1974; SSCSA Nuevos ingresos para el curso 1974–1975; SSCSA Nuevos ingresos (1975–1976); SSCSA Nuevos alumnos que ingresaron para el curso 1976–1977; SSCSA Nuevos ingresos para el curso 1977–1978; SSCSA Nuevos ingresos para el curso 1978–1979; Interview 2; Interview 4.

174 AHAH Arzobispado Material de Estudio.

175 O’Malley 2008, 231.

176 AHAH Arzobispado Material de Estudio; Interview 4; Gómez Treto 1988, 68.

The future of the Church depended on the ability to sustain the seminaries and ordination into the ministry on a continuous basis. One priest active in rural Cuba sarcastically remarked that the despair of the Church brought on by the lack of vocations led to priests and bishops scanning their diocese for unmarried, trustworthy and relatively young Catholic men who would make good candidates for the ordained ministry, almost forcing them into airplanes that would quickly take them to a seminary in Rome.<sup>177</sup> Behind the humor lay a real concern: diocesan councils admitted that the frantic search for new candidates occasionally resulted in the selection of individuals unsuitable for the ministry.<sup>178</sup> Similar remarks had also been made by the Cuban Communist party. The party identified the incapability of the Church to entice new seminarians as a constant source of worry for the episcopal hierarchy; to find new seminarians, the Church had begun to take exhaustive measures at reforming and revitalizing the life and order of the seminary.<sup>179</sup>

In revolutionary Cuba, ministry was a challenging path as a lifestyle and professional trajectory. With discriminative policies on religion established by the revolutionary regime, the antireligious atmosphere, negative reactions to religious forms of expression in social life and materialist atheism as the didactic framework of education, the decline in public participation in religious practices was mirrored also in the dramatic decline in the number of seminarians. Given the atmosphere of public suspicion and hostility towards the Church, aspirations for ordination into the ministry were not well received within families and respective communities. Particularly vulnerable were small and rural Catholic communities receiving less attention and support from clergy; in local communities, promotion of the ministry had been seriously ignored in the course of the revolution.<sup>180</sup> As a collective trend in families, the cumulative effect of parents not introducing their offspring to religion had resulted in declining interest in the ministry. At times, clergy accused families of not encouraging their sons to consider the ministry: “The negative stance of parents shows the poor religious formation they received,” remarked the council for vocations in Pinar del Río in 1970.<sup>181</sup>

For an aspirant to the ministry, the decision to enter seminary and become ordained seemed a stigmatized act, setting the candidate and his family visibly apart from the masses participating in the revolutionary process. The experiences of alienation by clergy and the peculiarity with which priests were perceived in Cuban society was discussed in Holguín:

In our society, a priest is a second-class citizen. Celibacy, poverty and obedience are valued by people integrated into the community but less by those in the periphery; they are not believed, they are doubted, they are despised as objects of mockery in society. The situation of our Church does not allow priests to realize their ministry according to their attitudes and gifts.<sup>182</sup>

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177 Interview 31.

178 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Vocaciones y seminarios.

179 AHAH Arzobispado Material de Estudio.

180 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Vocaciones y seminarios.

181 La postura negativa de los padres muestra la mala formación religiosa que recibieron. ACOPR Vocaciones, Pinar del Río, 9.8.1970.

182 El sacerdote en nuestra sociedad es ciudadano de 2da. categoría. El celibato, la pobreza, la obediencia, es valorada por personas muy integradas a la comunidad: menos por los de la periferia; descreído, dudado y despreciado como objetos de burla por el medio social. APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Sacerdotes.

The Church attempted to counter public opinion by emphasizing the sacramentality of ordination into the ministry. In order to support families with aspirants to the ministry, and the candidates themselves, the Diocese of Havana created and published study materials for laypeople on how to react if a family member was considering becoming ordained in the ministry. The materials emphasized the sacramental nature of the ordained ministry: the blessing bestowed upon the family as a member aspired to receive ordination, and in equal measures upon the entire community from which a member was considering entering the seminary.<sup>183</sup> The material acknowledged that while ordination into the ministry was a deeply personal process for the candidate, it was also a collective experience, reflecting upon both the social background of the aspirant and the community which he was assigned to serve. As such, it was also a call of imperative nature not to be resisted by the aspirant nor their communities.

To counter the stigmatized nature of the ministry, laypeople were instructed to offer their support to the families whose sons were considering entering the seminary and to encourage families to further persuade the candidate to pursue the option. As to the transcendent dimension of the ordained ministry, laypeople were asked to pray for an increase in the number of vocations on the island and to financially support seminaries in their work.<sup>184</sup> Both the concern for and support of communities for youngsters considering entering the ministry emphasized the position of the clergy: the ministry was not only a personal conviction, but also a public, collective act setting the candidate apart from the surroundings.<sup>185</sup> In this manner, the ministry was intertwined with personal beliefs, values and morality, and meaning-making of the world. In the revolutionary reality, it marked not only the individual in an all-encompassing manner; it also affected his family and even the neighborhood. The decision to enter the ministry was thus both a stigmatized choice and the assigning of the priest to a distinct role within revolutionary society.

“It wouldn’t hurt us to have more priests that are rooted in the life of the world, more profoundly educated in humanities, who, at the same time, are committed to the humane and humble vocation of sanctity in ministry,”<sup>186</sup> wrote Raúl Gómez Treto, who already in 1965 had identified a mounting problem being faced by the Cuban Church. The future of the Church was to be defined not only by the number of new clergy but also by their theological and pastoral vision. As Gómez Treto noted, in educating future clergy, the curricula of the seminary had not been able to respond to the signs of the times in post-conciliar Catholicism<sup>187</sup> or the Cuban revolution.

The need to introduce renewed paradigms of pastoral work for Cuban clergy had surfaced again in the reflections of 1969, this time with more urgency and concrete guidelines for the restructuring work needed. To this end, not only pastoral work was revised but specific attention

183 AHAH AC JF La Habana Circulo de estudio: El orden sacerdotal.

184 AHAH AC JF La Habana Circulo de estudio: El orden sacerdotal; APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Vocaciones y seminarios.

185 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Vocaciones y seminarios.

186 No nos vendría mal tener más sacerdotes curtidos en la vida del Mundo, más hondamente cultivados en Humanidades a la a par que bien comprometidos en la viril y humilde vocación de santidad del sacerdocio. AHAH AC JN Raúl Gómez Treto to Enrique Pérez Serantes 25.11.1965.

187 For conciliar teaching on priestly formation, see Akinwale 2008.

was also directed at the formation of the future clergy in Cuban seminaries. Equally important as theological and pastoral education was the reformed mindset of new priests.<sup>188</sup> The vision built on the Vatican II's emphasis on the priests' call to holiness, as followers of Christ in poverty, chastity and obedience.<sup>189</sup> In light of the new social commitment, the ideals of "the new priest" were defined as an authentic commitment to their ministry and life directed by their vocation; a daily life shared with the local community; the search for collective good in pastoral work; a missionary spirit and a spirit of poverty; and cooperation with and promotion of the laity for their increased autonomy.<sup>190</sup>

When discussing the ideal for clergy in the revolutionary society, a priest of the 1970s described a vision of the clergy rooted in the course of the revolution in daily life, yet with a sense of abstinence from public political performance. "The good things we praise on the streets; the bad things we criticize on the streets; to platforms we don't rise,"<sup>191</sup> he remarked, portraying not only the careful positioning of the Church in relation to the Cuban government and public political performance but also the essentially Cuban approach to critical discourse on the revolution, mirroring the theologies of the streets constructed by clergy and laity alike from experiences of the everyday.

The national Catholic seminary became an instrumental site for introducing both conciliar and contemporary Latin American theology in Cuba. It was in the early 1970s that conciliar theology was included and implemented in the curricula of the seminary; remarkably, even then the implementation took shape among European priests. In August 1970, Italian priest Bruno Roccaro and French priest René David Roset<sup>192</sup> arrived in Cuba to teach at *San Carlos y San Ambrosio*, with a particular focus on conciliar and contemporary theology. Both the fathers, without previous knowledge of Cuba or the Spanish language, and their students embarked on a journey: with the professors arrived new curricula, new courses, and new ideas.<sup>193</sup>

Recognizing the profound significance of implementing the teachings of the council in the life of the Church, the seminary became the primary channel through which the Church as a whole was further educated in putting conciliar theology into praxis. It was particularly essential to introduce young seminarians to conciliar theology. Studies in conciliar theology in the seminary were also a crucial factor contributing to the application of conciliar teaching in the liturgy and pastoral work of the Church, and thus the process of assuming and applying conciliar theology in Cuba was a prerequisite for advancing as a Church in the revolutionary reality.

Remarkably, while the need for theological education was recognized in the field, the introducing and reinforcing of contemporary theological discourse was executed as a top-down process for seminarians, as some contemporaries suggest that the new course of action was directed by the Holy See, following the general trend of European priests encouraging renewal

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188 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Vocaciones y seminarios.

189 O'Malley 2008, 231.

190 COCC AY Conclusiones de las semanas de pastoral de Santiago y La Habana. Sept. 1969.

191 Nosotros, las cosas buenas, las aplaudimos en la calle; la mala, la criticamos en la calle; nosotros no subimos a la tarima. Interview 24.

192 In this work, he is referred to as René David as per his request in Cuba.

193 Informe René David; Ragazzo 26.7.2018; Don Bruno Roccaro; Isasi-Díaz 2006.

and discourse in Latin America.<sup>194</sup> Supporting the claim was the role of Cesare Zacchi, the Holy See's apostolic nuncio to Cuba and his attempt to engage the Cuban Church in conciliar theology already in the mid-1960s. Further testifying to both the messiness of the moment and the hierarchy's awareness of the project was Father Roccaro's arrival with tourist permission,<sup>195</sup> also in the past, the nunciature had resorted to creative solutions for clergy and members of religious orders arriving in Cuba to avoid conflicts with the government without impeding the clergy's mobility.

The core of René David's teaching was conciliar theology: an entire generation of Cuban theologians learned about the council from him. What accounted for Rene David's influence even more was his aim to engage the seminarians in transforming conciliar theology into a Cuban application of it. Instead of just studying the teachings of the council, the young seminarians were required to first study and then interpret them in the light of *Cuba de hoy*.<sup>196</sup> His teaching carried a progressive tone. René David was an open advocate of the council, and he incorporated in his teaching a vision of liberation theology and pastoral work.<sup>197</sup> Through the influence of these teachers, the role of individuals in the process of renewing the Cuban Church was instrumental. Behind the ideas and institutions, agency was exercised by individuals invested in work at the grassroots level. Correspondingly, these individuals possessed a considerable amount of power: it was their vision and interpretation of the council that was introduced to the seminarians.

As a part of teaching conciliar theology, seminarians in Rene David's class were introduced to debates and the open exchange of ideas and opinions. In the spirit of *aggiornamento*,<sup>198</sup> seminarians were encouraged to study Marxist theories and critically analyze Marxism.<sup>199</sup> However, the discourse on Marxism did not derive solely from the perception of Marxism as an intrinsically incompatible and alien idea to Catholicism; it entertained the idea of Marxism as "the other" that deserved to be examined and analyzed in recognition of its meaning and significance for positive responses. In this way, the echoes of liberation theology were clear and tangible, although the theology as such was not recognized as a movement influencing the seminary. Some interviewees suggested that Father René David openly pronounced his support for the political left, while others insisted he approached Marxism from a more scholarly perspective.<sup>200</sup> With a progressive vision of teaching, René David nonetheless began to encourage seminarians to explore ideas alien to them and the Cuban Church. He encouraged seminarians to debate, to challenge each other's perceptions of both the Church they prepared to serve and

194 Don Bruno Roccaro; Tombs 2002, 73.

195 Ragazzo 26.7.2018.

196 "Cuba of today" was a common expression by the interviewees to describe the prevailing revolutionary circumstances. Interview 23.

197 Interview 8.

198 The term *aggiornamento* was used by Pope John XXIII to define the aims of Vatican II upon announcing the council in 1959. The Italian word is commonly used to describe the aspirations of the council, translating as an update of the Church. Hebblethwaite 1991, 27–28; Hackett 2003, 396.

199 For instance, SSCSA FM Filosofía Moral: III Secularización y ética cristiana; SSCSA FM Filosofía Moral: Moral católica y moral marxista; Interview 23; Interview 24.

200 Interview 6; Interview 8.



the country they already thought they knew.<sup>201</sup> In doing so, Father René David promoted dialogue and reconciliation.<sup>202</sup>

In assigning the curricula, Cuban seminaries operated outside State control; instead, the control reached into the daily life of the seminary and created confusion, as representatives of the government gathered information on the life and thoughts of future clergy by infiltration. In archival sources, this is discussed through references to “pressure and attempts at manipulation.”<sup>203</sup> According to oral histories, the government was particularly interested in the ways contemporary theology was introduced to seminarians.<sup>204</sup> This shows how the frameworks of the revolution were inescapably present in the life of the seminary, from both within and outside.

Those frameworks informed the way in which seminarians were trained. According to clergy and laity commenting on the restructuring of the seminary, the focus of education for the ministry was to be on pastoral work in the Cuban context. The education of the seminarians should form a solid spiritual and integral foundation and correspond to “the social reality we live in, raising men who are free and without fear, open to everyone, with a strong character.”<sup>205</sup> At the same time, they should be aware of the sacrifices required for the ministry, in service of reconciliation<sup>206</sup> and communion among the Cuban people. Love and service should define and transform the ministry, directing the clergy to demonstrate more openness towards the people and the realities of the streets, not towards isolation within the Church. The ultimate aim of training was a new ideal of the priesthood in Cuba, a priest as “a missionary committed to proclaiming the Gospel to the non-believers, to the poor, to all sectors of society.”<sup>207</sup> It is clear that with such ambition, the renewal was also met with criticism and resistance as the changing structures and approaches in the seminary also mirrored the internal tension and fractures of Catholic communities.<sup>208</sup>

Awareness of reality was an ever-present objective of life in the seminary. In their coursework, daily chores and interactions, future clerics were radically exposed to internal differences within their own ranks: trajectories of life, a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, and varying degrees of association and disassociation with the revolution. Already in the early 1970s, some seminarians came from families integrated into the revolutionary process as Catholics, and they voiced their support for the government. Regarding this complexity, a seminarian of the mid-1970s recalled the years at the seminary as a “time of learning,”<sup>209</sup> not only in theology

201 Interview 6; Interview 8; Interview 23; Interview 24.

202 René David’s vision of promoting reconciliation has been discussed also by Alonso Tejada. See Alonso Tejada 1999, 74–75, 84–85.

203 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Vocaciones y seminarios.

204 Interview 31.

205 La realidad social que vivimos, formando hombres libres y sin miedos, abiertos a todos y con un carácter bien definido. AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Seminaristas J–1, P. 9 Comunión con el pueblo.

206 Díaz-Cía 14.12.1969 Mensaje con motivo de Navidad y Jornada Mundial de La Paz 1970.

207 Misionero y preocupares por anunciar el Evangelio a los no-creyentes, a los pobres y a todos los sectores de la sociedad. AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Sacerdotes A–6, p. 8 Sacerdotes y cercanía a todos; AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Seminaristas A–1, p. 10 Comunión con el pueblo.

208 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Vocaciones y seminarios.

209 Un tiempo para educarse. Interview 23.

but also social relations and communication within the broader framework of Catholic life in the revolution.

At *San Carlos y San Ambrosio*, seminarians lived together from morning to night. Collectivity defined their lives: privacy was rare. Through the collective dimension of daily life, seminarians were educated towards becoming priests living more closely with the people as requested by the laity; they were to become priests who “would know their people and share their joys and pains, but would also be close to all of the people, breaking the stereotype of distance and isolation many have of them.”<sup>210</sup> The vision of the episcopate and clergy was also to reinforce the sense of community among seminarians, with the expectation that fraternity and loyalty would continue in their ministry as well. In the ministry, unity and cohesion were considered instrumental for pastoral work. In the Cuban context, close relations among the clergy amounted to a vision of uniform expression and conduct. A sense of reciprocal fraternity was also understood as a fortifying aspect in the clergy’s commitment to the ministry and a source of resiliency when facing the hardships of the daily reality in pastoral work.<sup>211</sup>

Despite the strong emphasis on unity, everyday conditions at the seminary also exposed seminarians to differences within the same shared reality. Daily life was filled with the sharing of experiences: discourse and dialogue, mutual visions of building the Church and *la patria*, but also disagreements and disputes on the methods of engagement. In the seminary, seminarians came to know their fellow Cubans and Catholics with varying degrees of assimilation and rejection of the revolution.<sup>212</sup> Through this radical exposure, *San Carlos y San Ambrosio* became a site of flux in encounters for both reflecting on the past and envisioning the future.

There were certain benefits to leading a life among a small group of seminarians in the confined environment of *San Carlos y San Ambrosio*. The seminarians knew each other well, were able to form a cohesive group—which did not equal uniformity or consensus—and maintain active dialogue amongst themselves. Seminarians and professors were in direct contact with each other, and studies in the seminary were marked with personal interaction surpassing hierarchical structure and protocol. This gave the cohort of clergy a sense of familiarity and directness.<sup>213</sup> Furthermore, the revision of daily life in the seminary in the spirit of Vatican II also contributed to their ability to relate to the surrounding society. Seminarians no longer resided in cells but in communitarian dormitories for six to eight students. With the central location of the seminary in Havana’s old town, and a less restrictive disciplinary culture, they also became increasingly rooted in the life of the neighborhood and were able to socialize with their families, friends and acquaintances in the district.<sup>214</sup>

In the group of barely 60 seminarians studying at *San Carlos y San Ambrosio* in the mid-1970s, the future of the Cuban Church came together. The young men studying to become priests constituted a new generation that would shape the clergy and hierarchy of the Church in the decades to come. From that group, theologians defining the discourse within the Church,

210 Conocerán a los suyos y compartirán sus alegrías y sus penas, pero también estarán cercanos a todo el pueblo, rompiendo la imagen de lejanía y aislamiento que muchos tienen de ellos. AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Sacerdotes A–1. p. 7 Cercanía al pueblo.

211 COCC AY Conclusiones de las semanas de pastoral de Santiago y La Habana. Sept. 1969; COCC AY Curso de Santiago.

212 Interview 23.

213 Interview 2; Interview 5; Interview 23; Interview 24.

214 Gómez Treto 1988, 58.

and from the Church to the revolution, began to emerge; those with strong visions of pastoral work in grassroots communities began to explore new openings for work and life in the Cuban context; from among the tight group of seminarians, the future faces of the Church began to emerge.

For seminarians, the years spent in preparation for ordination into the ministry represented a sense of recovery. In order to move forward as a Church, individuals committed to the work of the Church should “understand and forgive” each other by acknowledging the experiences of “the other” and correspondingly seek to illustrate one’s own perception of the Cuba of the moment to “the other.”<sup>215</sup> At the same time, seminarians were expected to focus their energy on the values and principles shared by all Cubans: appreciation of national culture and a sense of patriotism fostered despite the differences in life trajectories and thought.<sup>216</sup>

The defining factor in the process of understanding and forgiving was agreeing on what there was to understand and forgive. The first step was to admit and accept that the seminarians, coming from both urban and rural settings and a variety of social backgrounds, did not possess a uniform experience of the Cuba they lived in. For this reason, their visions of Cuba’s future—and of the Church’s role in it—also differed from each other. While some were offspring of the pre-revolutionary Batista supporters—and had family members in exile for that reason—others were sons of those families whose members had left the country in the 1960s after the triumph of the revolution.<sup>217</sup> Despite the differences, what they shared was the experience of exile in their family histories. Yet the group of seminarians also included sons from families already integrated into the revolutionary process, and together they all sat in class and debated theology with their unique perspectives on development of their shared *patria*.

As a whole, the seminarians saw themselves a counterforce within revolutionary society.<sup>218</sup> One seminarian from the 1970s described his daily life as an experience of liberty: the seminary freed him from the daily performance of the revolution, the quotidian compliancy with the revolutionary process and the social pressure of living the revolution in a public manner. At the same time, he found new philosophical frameworks for conceptualizing his experiences of Cuban life.<sup>219</sup> Like him, other seminarians also commented on the diversity of the group. Some had entered the seminary against their families’ wishes, more to their concern, while others came from families quick to pronounce their strong commitment to the Church throughout the revolutionary era. Some had begun to support the revolution and were increasingly committed to negotiating the identity of a Catholic priest and moral support for the positive achievements of the revolution in themselves; others maintained a fierce, categorical resistance to the revolution’s ideology. Despite these differences, in the seminary the courses of their personal backgrounds and experiences became intertwined through the shared experience of daily life in preparation for the ministry.

An examination of life at the seminary suggests that the reality of the Church was dualistic in the early 1970s: there were already seminarians with sympathy, even support, for the revolution. The decade was described by one seminarian as a time of “left-wing seminarians and

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215 Interview 6; Interview 23.

216 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Seminarios J–287 Valores patrios; Interview 6.

217 Interview 6; Interview 23.

218 Interview 6; Interview 8; Interview 23; Interview 24.

219 Interview 6.

right-wing seminarians”<sup>220</sup> living together. Life at the seminary imposed upon the new generation of priests the need to radically face the currents in ideologies, political ideas and theological interpretations that were different from their own.<sup>221</sup> A telling example of the diversity in political and thought among the seminarians is a prayer celebrated at the seminary in one of the daily services of devotion. During Salvador Allende’s presidency in Chile,<sup>222</sup> a seminarian asked for the group to pray for Allende and his rule. As an immediate response, another seminarian requested a prayer for those imprisoned in Cuba as martyrs opposing Marxism. In the collective prayer that ensued, both of these requests were fulfilled.<sup>223</sup> This reflects well Orsi’s view of calling prayer “a switching point between the social world and the imagination,”<sup>224</sup> a way to connect the two realities and make sense of one by use of the other. Through prayer, the seminarians both mapped imaginable realities and reached beyond their tangible, daily conditions. At the same time, through prayer they also created a reality in which the divine was found present and actively intervened in overcoming the social and political polarization dividing the seminarians; it also built bridges between the binaries, in the contexts that gave rise to prayer in the first place.

As a mirror to the exchange between the seminarians, in the first half of the 1970s seminarians would frequently pray for Miguel A. Loredó, a Franciscan father imprisoned in Cuba in 1966 for charges of harboring counterrevolutionaries,<sup>225</sup> and released in 1976 after an intervention by the Holy See through Zacchí. After his release, Father Loredó arrived at the seminary and taught moral theology.<sup>226</sup> In the same, repeating patterns of prayer, a seminarian recalled, they would pray “help me, Lord, to forgive”<sup>227</sup>—to forgive both their own experiences and those of their families, and to forgive those who thought differently and had acted upon the differences. Through these moments of prayer, a connection was formed between the religious and revolutionary worlds in the space where they overlapped. In these moments, prayer was not only private: it was intrinsically embedded in the social reality in which the seminarians gave religious meanings to the revolution.

As several seminarians recall, young men from different backgrounds embedded in the Cuban reality were brought face to face with social, economic and political variations within the shared reality, many of which extended beyond their own experiences as young adults, having become their own through the cross-generational histories of families and kinship. “We didn’t understand the theories of Marxism they praised, because we had lived through it in practice,” remarked one seminarian.<sup>228</sup> In the seminary, these views found resonance in each

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220 Seminaristas de la derecha y de la izquierda. Interview 23.

221 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Vocaciones y seminarios.

222 Chile’s Salvador Allende was the first leftist president to be elected in Latin America, his presidency spanning from 1970 to 1973.

223 Interview 23.

224 Orsi 2003, 173.

225 Pedraza states that in Cuban prisons in the 1970s, “every sector of society was present, every form of political and religious belief.” Pedraza 2007, 137.

226 Interview 23; FF Miguel A. Loredó; Gómez Tréto 1988, 56–57; Uría 2011, 553.

227 Ayúdame, Señor, a perdonar. Interview 23.

228 Nosotros no entendimos teorías del Marxismo que los otros admiraban porque habíamos vivido todas las ideas puestas en práctica. Interview 24; APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Vocaciones y seminarios.

other as the differences of opinion within Cuban society and daily social experiences became tangible for young seminarians. The realities multiplied and became more complex, messy and uneasy. At the same time, the encounters remained inter-ecclesial and provided further space for a heterogeneous spectrum of life stories within the Church.

In daily proceedings of study and work, seminarians were brought together and stimulated with the necessity of mutual cooperation amidst the intersecting mindsets. One priest, a student at the seminary in the mid-1970s, recalled the years at the seminary as being the most formative years in his life for growth “towards dialogue and reconciliation.”<sup>229</sup> Whereas he had come to the seminary from a family understanding and, at times, sympathetic to the revolution, he shared his daily life and thoughts with peers whose families had, at some point or else continuously, opposed the revolution and reflected on the revolution through their personal experiences of loss and grief.<sup>230</sup> These deeply intimate, contrasting histories also catalyzed conflicts among the seminarians. As the seminary became a site of encounter, it was inevitably also a site of contestation and confrontation. Tension was occasionally sparked also between seminarians and their teachers in matters regarding the new visions for conciliar theology and its implementation in Cuba. In the seminary, professors were not a homogenous group in their theological and pastoral views. As there were no established guidelines nor rules for teaching, each was free to follow their own curricula and perspectives.<sup>231</sup> This brought diversity into the pulpits of the seminary, and the generational shift became visible in the way change and continuity were perceived and addressed in the seminary.

In his work on Cuban religiosity, Miguel De La Torre notes that the inevitable change in expressions of faith embodied a generational transition. “Any faith practiced by the devotees of today’s generation will differ from the faith their parents, or grandparents, practiced,” De La Torre writes. He continues: “While the religious message may not necessarily change, the way the message is heard and put into practice usually does, as the younger generations replace the older ones.”<sup>232</sup> In other words, tensions arise in the period of transition as older and newer generations express themselves simultaneously but not in accordance. In Cuba, perhaps nowhere in the Church was the generational gap more tangible than in the discourse and daily life of more mature professors as compared to seminarians filled with youthful drive. It is noteworthy that the “coming off age” of the Cuban clergy coincided with the emerging of the first innate generation of Cubans in the revolution. In this regard, the late 1970s marked a maturation point for the entire revolution.

With the new generation of seminarians reexamining their relation to the revolution, a historical discrepancy within the Church became visible. If the identity of the Church was anchored to the revolution, had the Church proven capable of following the dynamic course of the revolutionary process, or was it frozen in time with references only to the messy moments of the young revolution of the 1960s? As a microcosm of the Catholic Church in Cuba, the examples drawn from the young generation of seminarians also suggest that within the Church, the spectrum of perceptions of the revolution was more multifaceted than had been publicly accounted for. As daily life in the seminary began to suggest, the previous binaries of Cuban

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229 Hacia un dialogo y una reconciliación. Interview 23.

230 Interview 23.

231 Interview 23; Gómez Tréto 1988, 58–59.

232 De La Torre 2003, 137.

revolutionaries and Catholics no longer corresponded to reality. Catholics of the late 1970s were not a homogenous group, united by opposition to the revolution. Within the realities of everyday experiences, categories had already become blurred and fluid. It was possible for Catholics to express an understanding of the revolution—yet in the normative frames of the revolution’s ideology, it was still unacceptable to link such revolutionary convictions to Catholicism.

In constructing a new approach to ecclesial life in the revolutionary reality, the seminarians of the early 1970s became a new generation of Cuban theologians. They were a new, first generation on multiple accounts, and they differed from their predecessors in several regards. First of all, in Cuba they were the first generation to complete their training for the ministry under the revolutionary rule. In this respect, they joined their peers as the first representatives of the post-revolutionary generation entering professional life. As has been argued by Fagen, this generation of Cubans was particularly appreciated by the revolutionary leadership since they represented the seeds of an entirely new, innate revolutionary culture. They were also the group “most exposed to the revolutionary experience” and accustomed to the cultural transformation brought on by the revolution. This allowed the generation insight into the prevailing reality and the here-and-now of the revolution.<sup>233</sup>

For this generation of seminarians, the revolution was more of an existing, ongoing reality of life than an episode that was expected to end, or whose outcome had not yet been fully determined or witnessed. In their training, the revolution was recognized as the prevailing political and social context—in contrast to a passing state-of-affairs—and one of the central aims of their studies was to qualify the future priests both theologically and pastorally to operate in *Cuba de hoy*,<sup>234</sup> the context of the moment. The revolution was considered “here and now,” as pronounced in oral histories, and the new generation was determined to operate as a church in the present tense and within the given context: the seminarians shared a sense of urgency of adjusting to proactive work in the daily experience on the island.

Second, as a consequence of the revolution and its attempt to nationalize the Church in Cuba by deporting foreign clergy and religious orders in 1961, the new theologians were the first entire generation of Cuban-born clergy. For them, the dynamics of the Church and State in the revolution were much more of a Cuban issue than they had been to their predecessors from Spain—a few of whom had returned to the island and taught them at the seminary or still served the Church as priests—who had often interpreted the scenario from their personal and cultural background. Social participation and a commitment to civil society were dimensions of Catholicism increasingly considered as normative by younger theologians, and this vision of pastoral work found resonance in the groups of committed laity, who also shared with them their overlapping realities of Catholicism and the revolution.

Third, on global scale the seminarians of the early 1970s were the first to conduct their studies in the post-conciliar contexts of Catholicism. Engagement with and immersion in conciliar theology was a conscious aim of both the seminarians themselves and the leadership of the seminary. Also stemming from and becoming intertwined with the influence of Vatican II

233 Fagen 1969, 147, 155–157.

234 Cuba of today. Interview 22.

in the region, the seminarians in Cuba of the 1970s witnessed the rise of Latin American theologies that promoted social consciousness and commitment. In a similar manner, issues of Marxism and the Church, and the role and engagement of Catholicism with other spheres of social life, were seen in a different light and with a more proactive emphasis by the new, post-Vatican II generation.

In the Cuban Communist Party, this development was noted and received with contempt, although rather straightforwardly drawing a similarity between Catholic social doctrine and the revolution's ideology: "There are believers who are supporters of the socialist regime - - they sincerely align with the cause of the oppressed and the Revolution."<sup>235</sup> The opening was explained as a natural consequence of understanding the benefits of revolutionary thought, not through the new discourses in Catholic social thought. Yet for the Church, herein lay a crucial distinction: to insist that the Church did not assimilate with Cuban society through a fascination with the revolution's ideology and policies, but because of the new interpretations of Catholic social consciousness and commitment.

Thus, the new theology became intertwined with new participation in society. While the State had previously assigned seminarians to obligatory military service,<sup>236</sup> which had been promoted by Zacchi as a part of the Holy See's diplomatic approach to Cuba already in the 1960s<sup>237</sup> but considered a disruption to life at the seminary by the young clergy themselves, in the early 1970s priests began to volunteer for work for the State in sugar fields and centers of work, with such engagement growing stronger among seminarians in the years that followed. Already from the year 1970 onwards, the seminary of *San Carlos y San Ambrosio* had voluntarily participated in agricultural work as an ecclesial institution and included the voluntary labor in its curricula for future priests.<sup>238</sup>

In their voluntary work in the countryside, seminarians were instructed against wearing cassocks, which further contributed to their assimilation with their peers.<sup>239</sup> As argued by Ana María Bidegain, in clerical apparel the soutane was a symbol of hierarchical power and detachment from the world; wearing it had been a custom generally employed in Latin America despite the risk of portraying and catalyzing a loss of contact with the very society in which pastoral work was being conducted.<sup>240</sup> This concurs with arguments made in previous chapters about laypeople abstaining from the use of religious pendants in a visible manner. In the 1970s, nuns working in State hospitals, though numbering only a few and always with a permit from the revolutionary authorities, decided against wearing habits at work, and seminarians and clergy in *obra social* wore lay clothes and not clerical wear. For them, clothing was a manner to both further assimilate into the Cuban population and not stand out as Catholics.<sup>241</sup>

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235 Hay creyentes sinceramente partidarios del régimen socialista - - se ponen sinceramente al lado de los intereses de los oprimidos y la Revolución. AHAH Arzobispado Material de Estudio.

236 Interview 1; Interview 2. As is discussed also by Gómez Treto, the obligatory military service (SMO, *servicio militar obligatorio*), which was instituted by the government in 1963, included the drafting of Catholic laymen, seminarians, and clergy. See Gómez Treto 1988, 59.

237 Uría 2011, 550.

238 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Seminaristas A–7, p. 11 Servicio al pueblo; COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estiú 9.5.1981; Interview 3.

239 Gómez Treto 1988, 58.

240 Bidegain 1985.

241 Interview 14.

In studies of material cultures of the revolution, clothing has been identified as a platform for expressing political values and affiliations.<sup>242</sup> Following Cabrera Arús and Suquet's argument, with clothing Cubans facilitated public identification with both revolutionaries and *gusanos*;<sup>243</sup> in this construction, groups of Catholics were clearly conscious of the political messages conveyed by apparel. Moreover, by defining their own stance on religious clothing and public engagement through their choices of clothing, these Catholics in fact participated in the production of revolutionary material culture as Catholics.

The idea of social inclusion of clerics was introduced to both Catholics and revolutionary Cubans via the participation of the seminarians in voluntary work. According to Archbishop Pedro Meurice, the seminary had joined agricultural labor alongside other institutions in the countryside in order to avoid setting the seminary aside as an exception; rather, the Church sought to include it in the ranks of institutions committed to the development of the countryside. The inclusion of manual labor in the work of priests had been accepted by Vatican II.<sup>244</sup> In Cuba, physical labor was seen to cultivate the future clergy by presenting a clear, concrete purpose for work.<sup>245</sup> In revolutionary ideology, cutting sugar cane was also seen as a practice in equality for Cubans;<sup>246</sup> by joining the work force, young priests manifested their commitment to social justice through equality.

In interviews, seminarians who had participated in voluntary work mentioned that the primary motivation for joining was to participate in the shared experience of Cubans in voluntary labor expected from them as a commitment to the revolution: to live in the same reality of all Cubans, as future clergy, and to simultaneously demonstrate the clergy's presence in the daily courses of life on the island.<sup>247</sup> This entailed "cutting sugar cane and working like mules,"<sup>248</sup> which was criticized by some seminarians as a sign of the impossible requirements placed on ordinary Cubans by the regime. Others emphasized the Church's social responsibility and moral commitment to produce a common good, and a few made positive remarks about the revolution.<sup>249</sup> One young priest at the time recalled the words of his bishop encouraging him to recognize the positive aspects of the revolution and to engage in them: "If the Devil does his work well, we have to help him in his work!"<sup>250</sup> Behind each reason and at the heart of such engagement was the intent to become included in the construction of *la patria*, from multiple perspectives and with multiple motivations.

The Cuban Communist Party viewed favorably the inclusion of clergy and seminarians in voluntary work as well as their support for lay Catholics to participate in activities as a means of increasing productivity and social engagement. Particularly well-received was the effort of the clergy to support young Catholics in their commitment to "military tasks in defense of the

242 See Cabrera Arús & Suquet 2019.

243 Cabrera Arús & Suquet 2019.

244 Chadwick 1993, 113.

245 COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estú 9.5.1981.

246 Fagen 1969, 158.

247 Interview 6; Interview 24.

248 Cortando caña y trabajando como mulas. Interview 24. These were the words of a Cuban priest who participated in the work as a seminarian. As discussed by Pérez, the Cuban government had addressed the work of cutting sugar canes with terminology borrowed from military and warfare vernacular: the work was described as a "combat" in which the cane cutters were organized into "brigades." Pérez 2015a, 270.

249 Interview 6; Interview 23; Interview 24.

250 Si el Diablo hace las cosas bien, ¡hay que apoyar a lo que hace el Diablo! Interview 24.



fatherland” and further engagement in the country’s economic and social activities.<sup>251</sup> Yet, the Communist Party framed such support from the perspective of it benefitting the revolution: it did not applaud the clergy’s participation through the presence of the Church, but because such presence increased the work force and showed a visible form of compromise with the revolution. Moreover, as participation in voluntary labor was viewed as an acceptance of the revolution’s standards and morals among the clergy, it was presented with a triumphalist tone by the Party. For the revolution, the Church’s voluntary participation in labor was not a theological matter: “For Marxists, it is more important that a believer is cutting sugar canes than to engage in discussion about whether God exists or not.”<sup>252</sup>

Behind the positive assessment by the government on the increasing social participation of the seminarians was the institutionalization of the revolution. According to Crahan, the 1970s saw the need of the government to establish more defined, pronounced relations of the revolutionary process with all sectors of Cuban society. This included strategic rapprochement with Catholicism, with the intention to support and reinforce more progressive social thought in Catholics and reduce their alienation from and disaffection with the revolution. Providing the impulse for the development were, for instance, Latin American revolutionary Christian movements in Chile and Columbia.<sup>253</sup> The strategic rapprochement was clearly expressed in the 1976 Constitution, which stated that despite materialistic atheism, the socialist State recognized and guaranteed freedom of religion and its profession within the legislative frameworks provided by the State. The activities of religious institutions were regulated by law, and by law it was also illegal and punishable to oppose through one’s belief the revolution and its exercise.<sup>254</sup> According to Crahan, responses from the Catholic Church to the article were largely positive: the statement clarified the position of the Church and enabled a gradual improvement of institutional relations between Church and State.<sup>255</sup>

Archival sources from the late 1970s emphasize the need to educate all Cubans on positive freedom of religion and to increase their capacity to act against the harassment of Catholic communities and individuals. Furthermore, they show that the Constitution was used proactively in both intra-ecclesial and social discourse by the Church to justify its increased public visibility and influence as a legislative right, and to argue for religious education as a right of children and parents.<sup>256</sup> Yet, with the defense of religious rights also prevailed the ever-present sense of limited discourse within the Church in Cuba. The more conscious the Cuban Church became of Latin American theologies and ecclesiology, the more it grew aware of its own discrepancies and deficiencies. A recurring realization was that the Church was not able to fulfill its mission on the island in a healthy manner. Despite the evolving visions of new theological and pastoral discourse, a painful paradox between ideals and realities persisted. The Church was growing increasingly aware of the need to develop new structures of work and expression

251 Los deberes militares de la defensa de la patria. AHAH Arzobispado Material de Estudio.

252 Interesa más para los marxistas un creyente cortando caña que la discusión acerca de la existencia o no de Dios. AHAH Arzobispado Material de Estudio.

253 Crahan 1985.

254 Constitución 1976.

255 Crahan 1985.

256 AHAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Atención pastoral de las comunidades 334 Pág. 3; AHAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Acción profética Problemas 19 S/N adición; AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Catequesis, A–4 p. 53, A–1 Derecho participación catequesis.

that would enable the creation of more space for religious agency in the evolving course of the revolutionary process.

#### 4. Adherence to the Holy See

In the spring of 1974, Cuba received a visitor from Vatican City.<sup>257</sup> As a specialist on Church–State relations under communism and the architect of the Vatican’s *Ostpolitik* since the papacy of John XXIII, Agostino Casaroli was a natural visitor to the island. Receiving Casaroli were representatives of both the Cuban Church and the government, with the diplomatic services of the Holy See.<sup>258</sup> As suggested by Fejérdy, part of the Holy See’s diplomatic vision was understanding the communist government’s yearning for international recognition and prestige.<sup>259</sup>

Present at Casaroli’s meetings with the Cuban government were the Holy See’s diplomatic representative to Cuba, nuncio Cesare Zacchi, and Leonardo Enriquez, who was in charge of Cuba in the Holy See’s secretariat—but not the Cuban bishops. Zacchi and Casaroli had become personally acquainted already in their formative years of training in Vatican diplomacy.<sup>260</sup> Casaroli also relayed a message from Pope Paul VI to Cuba’s President Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado,<sup>261</sup> and he visited historically significant sites of the revolution, a hospital and a municipal school, learning of the revolutionary curricula, and pedagogics.<sup>262</sup> The nunciature hosted a reception to which high-ranking officers of the Central Committee and ministries were invited. During the reception, Fidel Castro made a reportedly unplanned appearance and engaged in “an extensive and cordial discussion” with Casaroli, as described by the Cuban episcopate, Cuban State media and *L’Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican’s primary news outlet.<sup>263</sup>

The course of the visit<sup>264</sup> reflected well the policies of Casaroli’s diplomatic vision, a person known for conducting his work in privacy, through personal encounters and steady diplomacy. In his negotiations with communist governments, Casaroli’s aims were straightforward and practical: first, to secure the existence of the Church by, for instance, reinforcing the autonomy of bishops; second, to legally guarantee the Church certain rights, such as the right to assembly, to maintain property, the right to organize religious education, and the right to have access to media. Finally, the aim of Holy See diplomacy was to achieve full freedom of the Church within a communist system—which Casaroli himself acknowledged as a utopian goal.<sup>265</sup> Casaroli’s diplomacy reflected the Holy See’s *Ostpolitik*, which ultimately aimed at improving the situation of churches living under communist rule and preserving the unity of

257 COCC CASAROLI Visita a Cuba de Monseñor Agostino Casaroli.

258 COCC CASAROLI Visita a Cuba de Monseñor Agostino Casaroli; COCC CASAROLI Apendice: Cronología del viaje a Cuba de Mons. Agostino Casaroli, acompañado por Mons. Leonardo Enriquez; Casaroli 2000, xxxiii.

259 Fejérdy 2016, 114.

260 Uría 2011, 549.

261 COCC CASAROLI Noticias publicadas con ocasión de la visita a Cuba de Mons. Agostino Casaroli; COCC CASAROLI Apendice: Cronología del viaje a Cuba de Mons. Agostino Casaroli, acompañado por Mons. Leonardo Enriquez.

262 COCC CASAROLI Noticias publicadas con ocasión de la visita a Cuba de Mons. Agostino Casaroli.

263 Una extensa y cordial entrevista. COCC CASAROLI Noticias publicadas con ocasión de la visita a Cuba de Mons. Agostino Casaroli; Exhortación del Episcopado Cubano a los Sacerdotes, Religiosas y Fieles 1974.

264 COCC CASAROLI Apendice: Cronología del viaje a Cuba de Mons. Agostino Casaroli, acompañado por Mons. Leonardo Enriquez.

265 Hebblethwaite 1986, 68–69; Coppa 2008, 157–158.

the Catholic Church globally.<sup>266</sup> This vision was shared and reinforced in the Cuban context by Zacchi.

Yet the visit also fulfilled intra-ecclesial purposes. Accompanied by Zacchi, Casaroli visited all six Cuban dioceses from Havana to Matanzas, Camagüey, Cienfuegos–Santa Clara, Pinar del Río, and Santiago de Cuba. In each diocese, he met with local bishops, clergy, seminarians, and laity alike, discussing with them the concrete circumstances of pastoral work and daily realities.<sup>267</sup> Casaroli celebrated liturgies and delivered homilies, expressing his satisfaction over “the intense religious fervor” everywhere on the island as well as the clergy’s and laity’s “spirit of devoted adherence to the Holy See and firm fidelity to the Church.”<sup>268</sup> Inscribed in the proclamation was also an imperative for the Cuban Church to maintain a close connection to the Holy See and entrust the oversight of Church–State relations to the diplomatic services of the Holy See.

The Cuban episcopate complied with the imperative, highlighting the Cuban Church’s delight in the Holy See’s and Pope Paul VI’s active engagement with the reality of the Church on the island.<sup>269</sup> Critics of Holy See diplomacy have pointed out—particularly during Casaroli’s leadership—that despite the undeniable strength of the Catholic Church’s center-governed diplomacy, led from the Vatican on all continents and within all social realities in which the Church was present, a possible downside of the system was a reduction in the role of local ecclesial authorities and grassroots diplomacy between local actors.<sup>270</sup> Yet, Casaroli was invited to Cuba by the Cuban Episcopal Conference in order for the Holy See to acquire “a more personal, direct vision of the performance of the Church in Cuba.”<sup>271</sup> During Casaroli’s visit, diplomatic discourse took the form of exchanges between the Holy See, the Cuban government and local representatives of the Cuban episcopate.

After the visit, the Cuban Episcopal Conference published the Pope’s salutation relayed by Casaroli. The Pope assured Cuba of the direct awareness and intermediation of the Holy See as well as his appreciation for the work of the Cuban Church: “We wish to express our satisfaction over the way you wish to put forth a renovation of Christianity in your communities despite the profound changes which have occurred in your society.”<sup>272</sup> In the exhortation of the Cuban bishops to clergy, religious orders, and the laity, a sense of gratefulness for the Holy See’s and the Pope’s direct intermediation and engagement signaled further compliance with the Holy See’s presence and influence on the island.

The interpretations of Casaroli’s visit reveal a deeper current of the geographical orientation of the Cuban Church. Simultaneously with the visit and its reinforced focus on Cuba–Holy See relations, the Cuban Church was also opening itself up to ecclesial life in Latin America.

266 Uría 2011, 548; Fejérdy 2016, 120, 122.

267 COCC CASAROLI Apendice: Cronología del viaje a Cuba de Mons. Agostino Casaroli, acompañado por Mons. Leonardo Enríquez.

268 Un intenso fervor religioso -- un espíritu de ferviente adhesión a la Santa Sede y - - firme fidelidad a la Iglesia. COCC CASAROLI Noticias publicadas con ocasión de la visita a Cuba de Mons. Agostino Casaroli.

269 Exhortación del Episcopado Cubano a los Sacerdotes, Religiosas y Fieles 1974.

270 Hebblethwaite 1986, 74–76.

271 Una visión más personal y directa del desenvolvimiento de la Iglesia en Cuba. Exhortación del Episcopado Cubano a los Sacerdotes, Religiosas y Fieles 1974.

272 Queremos manifestarnos nuestra complacencia porque, en medio de los profundos cambios que se han verificado en vuestra sociedad, os preocupáis por imprimir un impulso de renovación cristiana en el seno de vuestras comunidades. Exhortación del Episcopado Cubano a los Sacerdotes, Religiosas y Fieles 1974.

The foundational influence in the reorientation was CELAM's third general assembly in Medellín in 1968, the invigorated social consciousness of the Latin American Church, and the rise of liberation theology. At the turn of the 1970s, liberation theology emerged as a theological framework for social consciousness and action in Latin America.<sup>273</sup> While it inspired a mass movement and transformed the social agency of Catholics in the region, liberation theology also began to face criticism. In both Latin America and Rome, criticism of liberation theology stemmed from a political reading of it, namely the references to Marxist doctrine and the use of Marxist categories when analyzing the prevailing Latin American socio-political context.<sup>274</sup> In Cuba, Casaroli's visit, representing as it did the Holy See's presence and influence, also came to mark a reinforced alignment with the Vatican as the Cuban Church began to define its stance on liberation theology.

At the same time, liberation theology provided some of the clergy and laity with a new framework for reflecting on the Cuban situation. The inability of the Church to employ visions of the global Church in the modern world again gave rise to a painful experience of missionary incompetence: of not being able to fulfill its prophetic participation in social life, understood as an essential dimension of the Church's presence in post-Vatican II Catholicism. As a response to this sense of incompetence, to the sense of a Church as yet unrealized, liberation theology provided a remedy for some. As was discussed in several interviews,<sup>275</sup> for some of Cuba's clergy liberation theology introduced a preferential framework for theological thought and expression in a Cuban context. The interest in liberation theology and its possible interpretation in Cuba was also alluring on a socio-political level to most progressive laypeople and a younger generation of clergy and seminarians.<sup>276</sup> As the Cuban government invited prominent Latin American liberation theologians onto the island, Catholic laypeople attended the discussions despite the episcopate's warnings against it.<sup>277</sup> At the same time, they began to express approval for the revolution's socio-political achievements, further signaling a diversity of socio-political thought within the Church. Nowhere was this more visible than in the Catholic seminary of Havana in the mid-1970s.

"The Latin American man wants to carve out his own destiny,"<sup>278</sup> was declared at the seminary as the new generation of clergy was encouraged to further identify with their Latin American brothers and sisters. While the Cuban episcopal hierarchy recognized the role of the Holy See, coming to terms with the realities of life on the island, far from diplomatic intermediation and the safety provided by institutions, was becoming an urgent focus of the seminary. Studies on the moral theology of everyday life and supernatural sources of happiness in daily life orientated future clerics towards appreciation of work and renewed pastoral visions of the everyday.<sup>279</sup> In this framework, explorations into liberation theology became a direct point of reference linking Cuba to Latin America.

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273 The emergence of liberation theology is usually dated to 1971 and the publication of *Teología de la liberación* by Gustavo Gutiérrez.

274 Tombs 2002, 228–230; Bingemer 2016, 27.

275 For instance, Interview 4; Interview 23; Interview 24.

276 Interview 6; Interview 23; Interview 24.

277 Interview 10; Interview 27.

278 *El hombre latinoamericano quiere labrar su propio destino*. SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación.

279 SSCSA TM Tratado de Filosofía Moral.

Such focus also provided a space for criticism of histories of colonization, neocolonialism, and external hegemonies, emphasizing the agency and autonomy of Latin American peoples. Through this discourse, the Cuban Church began to explore the interconnectedness of the Cuban revolution and Latin American politics in the mid-1970s. Ultimately, the discourse became anchored to secularization as a global trend and its Latin American forms, such as “revolutionary ideology and political radicalization.” By bridging the Cuban revolution with the broader context of both global Catholicism and the modern world, the seminarians were also inspired to place the Cuban revolution within the framework of Latin American history and politics. As was proposed at the seminary, the revolution and political radicalization were the particular expressions of Cuba’s identification with Latin America.<sup>280</sup>

To the seminarians, liberation theology was introduced as a “theology of the future,” while maintaining a claim to the permanency and contingency of God.<sup>281</sup> The new theology was presented as a method for a critical reflection on praxis, with a particular focus on eschatology and history as the foundations for reflection. With respect to liberation theology, the seminarians learned that, on the one hand, the construction of social justice was built on the kingdom of God in immanent reality; and, on the other, that participation in the process of liberation was the work of salvation in itself.<sup>282</sup> With such a course, Cuban seminarians were guided to see a natural, logical bridge from traditional Catholic social doctrine to Latin American theology, emphasizing liberation from oppression and poverty. According to the materials, the roots of liberation were set in John XXII’s *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*, the latter of which emerged as a papal response to the Cuban missile crisis and was therefore well-recognized on the island. The calls for social justice were further issued by the council in *Gaudium et Spes*, and finally, by Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio* in 1968. Yet the course also offered critical remarks and reflection on papal teaching: the contents of the course criticized *Populorum Progressio* for not explicitly, resolutely adopting the language of liberation, although alluding to it.

In the seminary, the merits of liberation theology were recognized in the way it treated the Church as “an institution called to be critical of society.”<sup>283</sup> Study of liberation theology also enabled seminarians to critically assess the history of Catholicism on the island, particularly “the Church in league with those in power.”<sup>284</sup> Further developed in the course was the condemnation of hegemony and the dominance of developed countries over Third World countries in search of liberation:<sup>285</sup> the example used in the study materials was the United States, clearly connected with Cuba’s complex history, both its prerevolutionary and revolutionary past of continuous U.S. dominance and influence on the island. The stark criticism of U.S. hegemony implicitly entailed understanding for the revolution’s claim to liberation from it.

At *San Carlos y San Ambrosio*, liberation theology was criticized for not providing sufficient attention to worship, reducing the elements of transcendence and sacramentality to pro-

280 SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación.

281 SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación, introducción.

282 SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación.

283 Llamada a ser instancia crítica de lo social. SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación.

284 La iglesia ligada a quienes detentan el poder. SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación.

285 SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación.

fanity. Most problematic was the political interpretation of the Bible and classic Catholic doctrine, and the politicized use of faith. Liberation theology was criticized for reducing theology to politics: diminishing the role of worship, sacraments, and the ministry by merging transcendence with the profane, thus enabling a distorted, political interpretation of theology and pastoral work. The equation of political liberation as work of divine intermediation was considered false, and liberation theologians were criticized for engaging in a type of analysis for which theology did not provide competence, such as politics and economy.<sup>286</sup> From a Cuban perspective, liberation theology seemed to distract religious leaders from the only existing domains of the Cuban Church: worship, liturgy, and intra-ecclesial activities, emphasizing as its primary site of operation the very reality that the Cuban Church considered itself isolated from: social discourse and participation.

In Cuba, the idea of liberation resonated inescapably with revolutionary visions of national auto-determination and agency. Liberation from external forces, the deconstruction of classes in Cuban society, the elimination of racism, the emancipation of women, and the fight against economic injustice were all among the revolution's socio-political aims and achievements with which liberation theology aligned itself. As the revolution built on a historiographical narrative of liberation, national sovereignty, and fulfilled promises, it responded to visions of the role of liberation theology in liberation efforts as a historical process in a temporal context. Yet, these similarities between liberation theology and the revolution became the ground upon which the institutional church in Cuba further rejected liberation theology.

Analysis of the study materials distributed in the seminary suggest a predominantly political reading of liberation theology, rendering a focus on Marxism as a political framework for theological reflection and pastoral action. Constantly remarking on Marxism as the foundation of liberation theology, the study materials at the seminary cast a strong emphasis on liberation as a historical process, of the place of human agency in the history of liberation and social revolution.<sup>287</sup> For this reason, some of the seminarians voiced a strong rejection of liberation theology, claiming that it had no influence on their thoughts.<sup>288</sup> Since the transformative effort to produce social change was placed on the interpretative frameworks of Marxism, it became an impossible consideration for the Cuban Church institutionally. Yet, as liberation theology was also inescapably compatible with the revolutionary process and philosophy, this connection required both awareness and independent thought from future clerics.

The interpretative discourse followed the globally dominant narrative on liberation theology. Globally, the main argument by the opponents of liberation theology was the ideological bridge of the theology to Marxism, despite some of the leading liberation theologians vehemently dismissing the argument as simplistic and reductive. The crucial nexus was the use of elements of Marxist thought, particularly in sociological and historiographical analysis as a tool for reflection—was that possible in a theological framework without fully embracing Marxist philosophy, possibly leading to violence through revolutions?<sup>289</sup> As argued by numerous scholars and liberation theologians themselves, the opponents failed to understand the spiritual and

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286 SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación.

287 SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación.

288 Interview 6.

289 Hebblethwaite 1986, 86–87; Carriquiry 2002, 240; Tombs 2002, 132; Turner 2007, 229–233.

pastoral depth of liberation theology, while at the same time ignoring the revolutionary commitment as a transformation of social structures, and instead placed a narrow and predominant focus on the analysis of sociopolitical reality with Marxist analytic categories.<sup>290</sup>

In Cuba, Marxism was more than a framework for analysis: it was a discursive reality of the late 1970s, constructed by and according to revolutionary ideology and reinforced by State institutions. At the same time, it was a newly emerging narrative of revolutionary historiography, one to which theistic Christianity did not pertain officially. Despite the binaries, religious and revolutionary discourses collided in unexpected ways. In the introduction to liberation theology for seminarians, a reference to Cuba's revolutionary reality was presented through a poem allegedly found amidst Che Guevara's personal papers.<sup>291</sup>

I love you, Christ  
Not because you came down from a star  
But because you made me realize  
That a man is made of blood, tears, anxieties, wrenches  
Tools for opening the doors leading to light  
Yes! You taught us that man is God  
A poor God crucified like You  
And he who is on His left side at Calvary,  
the bad thief,  
is a God as well!<sup>292</sup>

With inescapable references to liberation theology,<sup>293</sup> the study material raised difficult questions. Regardless of whether the historical evidence had belonged to Che and to what extent it was acknowledged as such by the revolution, would it have been possible in the 1960s, either in the narrative frames of the revolution or the Church, to even suggest that Che Guevara harbored an admiration for Christ? Only a few years earlier, could any of the self-proclaiming militant Catholics have identified Che as a theological thinker, and would that have been tolerated in the public sphere? Yet, the deceased revolutionary was studied at the seminary by future priests, as a sign of the gradual changes taking place in the mindset of seminarians and clergy in recognizing the mutually binding relationship of the Church and the revolution.

While normative Catholic discourse on the island recognized the prevailing social, political, and economic contexts, and referred to them as the realities in which the Church operated, it maintained a distance from what may be understood as a liberation theological understanding of the contextual nature of praxis. In this sense, the statements and the policies proposed by the Church remained cautious, even rejecting, of liberation theology, although they pointed towards

290 Boff 1993, 13; Sobrino 1993, 233–235; Tombs 2002, 132, 235; Hebblethwaite 2007; Turner 2007, 229, 231–233.

291 See Appendix 3, picture 4.

292 Cristo te amo / No porque bajaste de una estrella / Sino porque me descubriste / Que el hombre tiene sangre, lágrimas, congojas, llaves / Herramientas, para abrir las puertas corradas a la luz / Si! Tú nos enseñaste que el hombre es Dios / Un pobre Dios crucificado como Tú / Y aquel que está a la izquierda en el Gólgota: El mal ladrón / También es Dios! SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación.

293 In the studies of liberation theology, Ferm presents Guevara as one of the individuals who have significantly contributed to the formation and interpretations of liberation theology on the grassroots level in Latin America, incarnating “the basic features of liberation theology” by his life and example. See Ferm 1986, 12–13. A similar remark is made by Orozco & Bolívar, who identify the Cuban Catholic priest Guillermo Sardiñas Menéndez as a revolutionary who participated in the armed struggle against Batista. They refer to him as a predecessor and an inspiration for liberation theology in Latin America. Orozco & Bolívar 1998, 349.

discourse on the Cuban hermeneutics of liberation theology. At the grassroots level, liberation theology nonetheless reinforced the pastoral focus of clerics on local communities, daily life, and lived experience in the revolutionary context.

As the curricula of the seminary suggests, future clergy were directed to grounding their spirituality in immanent realities, to seek resonance with the reality of the streets and homes of lay Catholics, as experienced already for years. Although excluded from the public sphere, religiosity was woven into daily practices, domestic expressions, and intimate emotions. Therefore, the focus of pastoral work also became orientated towards grassroots expressions and everyday experiences. In this development, liberation theology assumed a role in the daily exchange among progressive clergy, seminarians, and the laity.

For future priests, the focus on the grassroots level offered consolation on the nature of the Cuban Church as an unfilled church, only partially fulfilling its mission and prophetic action. In liberation theology, a particularly deep resonance with the Cuban situation was the emphasis on divine presence and intermediation in contexts stripped of riches, privileges, and hegemony. In a powerful statement, the young seminarians were assured that also in Cuba, the “joy of encountering Christ the Liberator lives in the communities, in their tiny temples, and not in the grandeur of the Church in human history.”<sup>294</sup> The consoling message directed the clergy to recognize the value of the everyday even in the revolutionary setting, and encouraged them to find meaning in their pastoral work: to see the value of individual encounters, of day-to-day life, and the small advances made in local communities, while also remaining painfully aware of the missing elements and resources for pastoral work.

## 5. A Dechristianized, Missionary Field

After the dissolution of Catholic Action in 1967, many of the formerly militant young adults became integrated into the revolution.<sup>295</sup> Even before that, the forms of youth agency created by the revolution had effectively included former Catholic youth and young adults.<sup>296</sup> The Church had lost its most prestigious organizations for engaging the youth and young adults in Catholicism with the declining resources and dissolution of Catholic Action’s numerous groups for young people, as well as groups for Catholic workers and students, such as *Juventud Obrera Católica* and *Juventud Estudiantil Católica*.

The revolution had provided the youth with structures for institutional participation in the form of student organizations, camps, and recreational activities. Through these mass organizations and structures established in the first years of the revolution, the revolution had successfully sought to educate new generations of supporters and, ultimately, to influence the young generations in their commitment to the revolution.<sup>297</sup> Yet in the early 1970s, as discussed by Mesa-Lago, it was publicly acknowledged in Cuba that “the work with the youth had been abandoned with grave negative consequences of a political, educational, and moral nature.”<sup>298</sup>

294 SSCSA TL Teología de la Liberación.

295 Interview 22.

296 AHAH AC JN Conclusiones de la reunión de la Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana con los consejos nacionales de las ramas, celebrada el día 2 de noviembre de 1963.

297 Guerra 2012, 138; Pérez 2015a, 261.

298 Mesa-Lago 1978, 101.



At the same time, particularly the young people in Catholic communities seemed to distance themselves from the institutional church in order to comply with the social norms of the revolution and to not publicly be affiliated with elements of society generally considered anti-revolutionary, such as groups of committed Catholics and the Church. For young adults whose particular motivation in life was to pursue academic and professional careers, association with the Church “was not convenient.”<sup>299</sup> In addition, the new revolutionary activities provided by the State competed, often successfully, with Catholic leisure programs.<sup>300</sup> They were also a response to the boredom experienced by Cuban youth, which the government was eager to combat since such boredom was a possible source of discontent and alienation from revolutionary participation.<sup>301</sup>

In the mid-1970s, Havana’s commission for catechesis had already described Cuba as a “dechristianized environment”<sup>302</sup> in dire need of renewed approaches and practices for theological education. Responding to the challenge, catechesis became an overarching theme of pastoral work on the island. It was a bridge from the clergy to the religious orders and laity, and from within the places of worship out into the streets and homes of Cubans. In the seminary, future priests studied the guidelines of catechesis.<sup>303</sup> They studied the foundations and principles of catechism in pastoral work, and they were reminded of the “necessity of organic and systematic Christian education, mindful of the certain instances intending to minimize its importance.”<sup>304</sup>

From the perspective of the State, an emphasis on the young generation of revolutionaries and their education was foundational for the legitimacy of the revolution.<sup>305</sup> The promise of the youth was crucial for sustaining the revolution, and to this end the revolution sought to impose on the youth its version of appropriate youth culture, often contrasting it with those found in other societies. A sense of duty, personal abnegation, and love of country were among the values of the revolutionary youth. According to Fagen, the emphasis on the youth derived from the vision of young revolutionaries as uncorrupted and pure, easily introduced to communism.<sup>306</sup> A similar insistence on the significance of youth is recited in religion. As pointed out by Orsi, the Church envisions its future through children: by them, “the inchoate possibilities of the culture’s imaginary futures” become imaginable and tangible.<sup>307</sup>

Casavantes Bradford proposes that from the first years of the revolution onwards, “by recruiting boys and girls to the Revolution’s own campaigns, the revolutionary government sought to divert bodies, resources, and enthusiasm away from community and Church-based associations and direct them toward state-led organizations and programs.”<sup>308</sup> Through these structures, the revolution had been able to cover for an entire generation of young Cubans. As they were coming of age in the 1970s, they represented the first generation to have grown up within the frameworks of the revolution. By the late 1970s, the effect of this became visible in

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299 Pedraza 2007, 241.

300 Schmidt 2015, 233–324.

301 Smith & Padula 1996, 178.

302 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

303 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

304 SSCSA CQ Tercera parte.

305 Fagen 1969, 145; Smith & Padula 1996, 146; Casavantes Bradford 2014, 7.

306 Fagen 1969, 145–146, 155–157.

307 Orsi 2005, 78.

308 Casavantes Bradford 2014, 75.

the Church. The loss of domain for young adults produced the need to counter the exodus with new structures for youth agency and participation in ecclesial activities.

In order to address the decline in the younger generation's affiliation with Catholicism, the Cuban Church sought to reinforce its focus on catechesis and reaching out to adult Catholics estranged from the Church. Already in the late 1960s, catechism had been identified as a structural option for widespread activity.<sup>309</sup> The Holy See had encouraged the Cuban Church to undertake catechesis as an area of development already in 1963, also informing Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the competing form of education provided by the Church.<sup>310</sup> In 1965, the suggestion to direct specific attention towards youth and their religious formation had again been raised by Catholic Action's lay leaders.<sup>311</sup> A course on the foundational principles of the Catholic faith, the Bible, liturgy, and theology had been called for by young Catholic laity already in 1969 as a source of renewal, enabling the laity to have more agency given the shortage of clerical resources.<sup>312</sup>

In the course of the mid-to-late 1970s, courses on catechesis for the laity were organized in several dioceses, among them the archdioceses of Santiago de Cuba and Havana. Catechesis was understood as one of the few possible missionary activities on the island. It was, consequently, placed at the center of the persistent, unyielding pain of attempting to strike a balance at the intersection of an increasing missionary mentality and the almost non-existing frameworks in the public sphere for realizing it.<sup>313</sup> With this interpretation, the Cuban Church attempted to join the movement for new evangelization in Latin America.

For religious orders, catechesis provided a purpose for such religious formation<sup>314</sup> while simultaneously corresponding to the Cuban context of religious education excluded from public schools. In a similar manner, catechesis allowed laypeople agency in action and service: as was noted by the Diocesan Council for Catechesis in Havana, the role of lay women in particular was instrumental for teaching and transmitting Catholicism in their daily communities.<sup>315</sup> For them, catechesis offered an institutionally established channel and framework for agency. Furthermore, laypeople's strong presence in catechesis disengaged clergy from absolute autonomy and provided relief for the continuing lack of priests on the island.

In a non-religious environment, it was crucial to portray catechesis as a credible approach to Catholicism: a belief and thought system surpassing the mere performance of rites and rituals, rooted in a continuous daily lifestyle and identity. Furthermore, the identity of Catholics in Cuba, as established through catechesis, was not grounded in the paradox of religion and the revolution: Catholics were encouraged to self-identify as integrally religious, not as *gusanos*, anticommunists, *proyanquis*, or pro-Soviets<sup>316</sup>—faith was emphasized as surpassing all ideo-

309 COCC AY Equipo No. 1 – Sacerdotes de la Capital.

310 ACMINREX SS Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores to Mons. César Zacchi.

311 AHAH AC JD La Habana Proyecto de la comisión para el plan de trabajo de la Junta Nacional de Acción Católica Cubana.

312 COCC AY Grupo 13 – Laicos Jóvenes (Hoja No. 2).

313 SSCSA CQ Tercera parte.

314 SSCSA CQ Quinta parte.

315 SSCSA CQ Quinta parte.

316 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

logical and political boundaries, although these dimensions also show how catechesis, a foundational dimension of Christian teaching and commitment to faith, also served social and political purposes.

Yet the Church maintained that in catechism, there was no space for political nor social perspectives. The diocesan committee of Havana warned against “all temporal, social, or political Messianism,”<sup>317</sup> including a subtle nod towards not only Catholics but also Fidel Castro and the revolutionary production of cultural religion and religious sentiments for revolutionary participation. In local communities, catechesis was also understood as missionary activity targeting the non-believers on the island, where “the young generations don’t know God, and what they know about Him is false or distorted.”<sup>318</sup> A particular focus for catechesis teachers was thus to acknowledge the challenging situation of Cuban teenagers and young adults: alienation from the Church and religiosity as a result of parental education, social norms, and political structures.<sup>319</sup>

In the 1970s, the children of the parents who had become integrated into the revolution and assumed its ideological premises were growing up without any religious instruction. Sustaining religious identity among them was harder.<sup>320</sup> To better respond to the challenge, catechesis teachers were trained to address the daily reality of young people not affiliated with the Church:

Children and young people live in a dechristianized, materialistic environment - - Let us assume that a group of unbaptized or baptized children, at whose homes they don’t talk about God to them, enter a church. For them, God is a grand mystery, and many things make them laugh. What to tell them?<sup>321</sup>

Catechesis painted a realistic image of the state of religious education on the island. Yet the clergy in charge of restructuring the theological formation of young laity also warned against simplistic, binary judgments: they preached against seeing Cuban youngsters as a lost generation, while romanticizing the religious commitment of the elderly, thereby losing hope in their conversion. They also discussed the temptation to remain in ecclesial comfort zones, forgetting about the transformative nature of mission work.<sup>322</sup> “We must focus our resources towards the parents of children in order to make the children feel that their parents are supporting them,”<sup>323</sup> emphasized the teachers of the course on catechesis. The radical decline in the popularity of revolutionary mass organizations for the youth<sup>324</sup> also provided the Church with a new opening into attempting to capture the attention of young Cubans.

According to Havana’s clergy, complacency among those already inside the Church amounted to dishonesty with respect to the missionary effort, to the detriment of those outside the Church. The nature of the Church as a prophetic community was not to simply stay with the young people who already practiced religion at home and whose parents had a positive attitude

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317 SSCSA CQ Quinta parte.

318 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

319 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

320 Pedraza 2007, 243.

321 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

322 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

323 Debemos enfocar los esfuerzos hacia los padres de los niños para que éstos se sientan apoyados por los primeros. SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

324 Mesa-Lago 1978, 101–102.

towards religion; the mission of the Church was to reach beyond becoming satisfied and complacent with the mere appearance of religion and settling for a mere façade of the catechism, acting as a “numeral and sociological minority” resolving itself to a limited existence.<sup>325</sup> Through catechesis, grassroots activity, and the reinforcing of Catholic identity, progressive clergy and laity demanded more audacity in proclamation and action.

The Church’s focus on the formation of families linked with the changing discourse on family in the revolution, as the Family Code of 1975 emphasized the role of family as the base unit of society, correcting some of the previous emphasis on State primacy over family.<sup>326</sup> In the Church, this served to allow Catholic families more autonomy in their religious orientation. The discourse did not go unnoticed by the revolutionary government. In 1977, the Communist Party noted the increasing activity of the Church, particularly in reinforcing its presence among Cubans with a renewed focus on catechesis.<sup>327</sup> Correspondingly, as is discussed by Smith and Padula, in the late 1970s Cuban officials began to declare that the introducing of revolutionary values to children and youth was possible only by distancing them from their “parents, grandmothers, uncles, and other retrograde influences.”<sup>328</sup>

The prerevolutionary reality of such retrograde influences, from which the young generations of Cubans needed to be distanced, included religion. At the same time, the revolutionary discourse on the role of cross-generational exchange within families resonated inescapably with the exchange of religious knowledge and transmission of religious practices in the domestic sphere through senior members of the family assuming autonomy and agency, as discussed in chapter III. Furthermore, it was connected with the role reserved for elderly lay Catholics as leaders of catechesis and study groups in ecclesial activities, actively seeking to communicate religion to younger generations. The contesting discourses on family promoted by the Church and the State ultimately point towards the concept of an ideal revolutionary family constructed by and orientated towards policies and publicly imposed norms. The family as a nucleus of religious identification did not fit with these norms; family was accepted as an active unit of Cuban society so long as it complied with the promotion of revolutionary ideas.

In an environment of continuous discriminatory policies, the focus on catechesis was also an effort to reinforce and reconstruct Catholic communities.<sup>329</sup> Catechesis allowed the Church to emphasize that community, the everyday cohort of Catholics coming together, was also both the physical and theological site for manifesting Christian identity.<sup>330</sup> Catechism was one of the manners in which communities were reinforced and new members introduced to them; liturgy and continuous study were used to maintain communities.<sup>331</sup> As catechism was deeply rooted in the community, using “the community is the point of reference for catechism,”<sup>332</sup> it was seen as a way to strengthen communities.

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325 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

326 Smith & Padula 1996, 154; Pérez-Stable 2012, 117.

327 Un mayor acercamiento e identificación con las organizaciones continentales e internacionales de la Iglesia. AHAH Arzobispado Material de Estudio.

328 Smith & Padula 1996, 146.

329 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

330 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas; SSCSA CQ Tercera parte.

331 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

332 La comunidad es el punto de referencia de la catequesis. SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

In 1978, particularly relevant were the words of the newly elected Pope John Paul II, encouraging churches globally to promote Christian education and attachment to religion, in particular in communist societies. Particularly appealing to Cubans was the emphasis on “serenely affirming the Catholic identity” of Cuban youth, “to ‘see the invisible’ and adhere in an absolute manner to God in order to be able to give a testimony of Him in a material civilization denying Him.”<sup>333</sup> In the first years of his papacy, John Paul II reinvigorated the Catholic Church’s stance on communism, while simultaneously questioning communist rule in European countries and continuing the Holy See’s policy of conciliation with communist regimes. As a visible sign of continuity, he named Agostino Casaroli Secretary of State for the Vatican.<sup>334</sup> Pope John Paul II’s stance on communism was also reflected in his reading, and consequent rejection, of socio-analytical discourse in liberation theology through Marxist dialectical materialism.<sup>335</sup>

The discourse surrounding catechesis and reinforced focus on the Catholic education of adults revolved around expressions of religion in the revolutionary reality: the collective nature of religiosity and communities as primary sites of religious belonging. In interviews with both clergy and laity, *la comunidad* was used synonymously with the concepts of a parish and a church on both the local and national level. It referred to both local Catholic parishes and groups and to a large sense of identification as Catholics in revolutionary Cuba.<sup>336</sup> According to sociologist Adrian H. Hearn, a distinctive feature of Cuban religious communities was to “harbor high levels of internal solidarity”<sup>337</sup> as a response to the pressure generated by identification as a marginalized group within the revolutionary reality. Numerous examples in this study point to the ways in which internal solidarity was experienced, constructed, and also contested. They also suggest that communities were constructed in a dialectical relationship with the revolution, and interpretations of historical events have continued to influence the dynamics of Catholic communities in Cuba.

Cuban scholar of religion Miguel A. De La Torre, in a collaborative work with Edwin David Aponte, names community, *la comunidad*, as one of the most integral features of Latino/a theologies.<sup>338</sup> Community may be seen as a site of spirituality, portraying a sense of religious belonging. Yet more than a mere site, community is an experience, omnipotent and unifying, as argued by De La Torre and Aponte. The meaning of community becomes even further reinforced in Latin American Catholicism by the emergence of ecclesial base communities in the spirit of liberation theology. Closely related to *la comunidad* is the concept of *la familia* as an extended network of fictive kinships,<sup>339</sup> such as those formed within ecclesial communities.

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333 A afirmar serenamente su identidad cristiana y católica, a “ver lo invisible” y a adherirse en tal manera al absoluto de Dios que puedan dar testimonio de El en una civilización materialista que lo niega. SSCSA CQ Quinta parte.

334 Coppa 2008, 185.

335 Hebblethwaite 2007; Bingemer 2016, 26–27.

336 Interview 1; Interview 2; Interview 4; Interview 5; Interview 17; Interview 19; Interview 23; Interview 24.

337 Hearn 2008, 9.

338 In *Introducing Latino/a Theologies*, Miguel A. De La Torre and Edwin David Aponte discuss latino/a theologies among and by the Hispanic communities in the United States. As no comprehensive scholarly work has been conducted on the expression and performance of Cuban Catholic spirituality on the island, this work accommodates De La Torres’ and Aponte’s work on Cubans as a part of the Hispanic community in the United States regarding the core premises of ecclesial terminology and symbols.

339 De La Torre & Aponte 2001, 65–66.

These experienced and constructed kinships, with a sense of belonging to a community and connecting with its other members, are mentioned in both archival sources and oral histories of the 1970s, with members of Catholic communities discussing their internal webs of relations within the revolutionary reality.

In the daily life of the revolution, Catholics formed sub-communities within society and its various sectors. Distinctive to Catholic communities was their nature as intersectional groups: to a single Catholic community belonged Cubans of various roles and commitments in civic life. Catholic communities intended to cover all age groups. Within communities, an expectation of engaging with the community prevailed; practicing was so intrinsically tied to collective expressions and performance that participation in the life of the community was normative.<sup>340</sup> It was also considered a foundational dimension of faith, manifesting commitment. Focus on community emphasized the changing role of Catholicism in the revolution, also by providing a collective framework for sharing and living the daily reality distilled through ecclesial participation. From the emphasis on community emerged an experience of internal solidarity: in several interviews with laypeople, the era was described as “good times for the community,” with small but committed groups invested in what they found existentially meaningful. From the laity’s perspective, they were also acting with considerable autonomy and creativity, making it so that they experienced a sense of ownership and agency over their communities.<sup>341</sup>

The changing role of the Church through the loss of institutional hegemony and social privilege resulted in an emphasis on the personal commitment of Cubans to the Catholic faith. Guidelines for active laity emphasized the individual experience of meaning constructed through religion. As vital as the transmitting of the religious traditions, practices, and cultural elements of Catholicism had been to the legitimacy of religion in the revolution, it no longer sufficed. “I don’t believe in God simply because mom and dad are also religious,” declared the guidelines for constructing ideal lay participation: “I don’t attend the Mass because they [mom and dad] take me, but because I believe in God as I have ‘felt’ him in my life, in my heart, because my life would not have meaning without Him.”<sup>342</sup> In this manner, individual and personal experiences of faith also contributed to the meaning-making of Catholicism in Cuba in the late 1970s. Catholicism was discussed and reinterpreted not only through its institutional and social dimensions in revolutionary participation, but also through existential, deeply intimate visions on the meaning of religion and religiosity for individuals within the revolutionary reality.

Yet it was precisely by personal, intimate relations of religious belonging that the Church expressed concern over the crisis in the separation of faith from everyday life. According to Havana’s clergy, many in their flock felt inferior to the militant communists, and at the heart of this disheartening experience was the separation of faith and life. “What I claim to believe in does not guide my life, doesn’t impact it,” is how the clergy described their perception of the

340 For instance, SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

341 Interview 11; Interview 22; Interview 26; Interview 27; Interview 30.

342 No creo en Dios simplemente por mami y papi son también religiosos; no voy a Misa porque me llevan, sino que creo en Dios porque lo he “sentido” en mi vida, en mi corazón, porque mi vida no tendría sentido sin Él. SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

quotidian manifestations of religiosity. This led the clergy to reflect on the missionary ambitions of the Cuban Church: “We are not capable of conquering, of revolutionizing - -. A religion lived like this cannot conquer the people of today: a traditionalist and overly emotional religion is already antiquated.”<sup>343</sup> From the perspective of the Church, personal conversion required individual encounters, which led to reinforced preparation of activities and teaching. Despite the scarce economic resources, new ideas on teaching promoted new methods, such as the use of photos, music, role play, and Bible reflection in catechesis.<sup>344</sup>

Cuban clergy stressed that “the Christian community, the living representation of the Mother Church, should feel responsible for the growth of the Church.”<sup>345</sup> Entrance to the community through baptism and catechesis was instrumental; similarly crucial were individual, inviting encounters among neighbors, colleagues, and peers. Communitarian celebrations, such as baptism, provided opportunities for joint celebrations by Catholics and non-Catholics.<sup>346</sup> This also responded to the numerous public programs of participation provided by the government, revolutionary activities of leisure, and collective celebrations on the streets.<sup>347</sup>

While the popularity of collective celebrations was generally high among Cubans in the 1970s, within the Church the celebration of birth, in particular, was considered a unifying experience, and Catholics were encouraged to celebrate infantile baptisms collectively. Not only parents and godparents should be invited to public celebrations, but also relatives, family friends, and acquaintances from throughout the neighborhood.<sup>348</sup> Particularly empowering was the encouragement to baptize children in local churches and residential neighborhoods;<sup>349</sup> it marked a stark contrast to the oft repeated occasions during the 1960s of underground baptisms and baptisms without celebration in remote locations far from the daily life of the parents so as not to become stigmatized through affiliation with the Church within the social framework of the revolution.

The focus on community, shared daily life, and religious celebrations as communitarian events provides manifold perspectives to counter the narrow understanding of the institutional marginalization of the Church. Also challenging the narrative of the Church turning inwards without exercising agency in the revolutionary reality are the more ample and diverse understandings of spirituality and religiosity provided by alternative perspectives on lived religion. As argued by Orsi, “the world of the sacred - - was encountered and celebrated through family life, hospitality, and friendship, as well as in the daily trials of the people.”<sup>350</sup> In the revolutionary reality, God was represented by the community. Cuban Catholics did not encounter God

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343 Lo que digo creer no informa mi vida, no le da impulso. No somos capaces de conquistar, de revolucionar - -. Una religión así vivida no puede conquistar al hombre de hoy: La religión costumbrista u sentimentalista es ya una pieza de museo. SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

344 SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas.

345 La comunidad Cristiana, vive representación de la Iglesia Madre, debe sentirse solidariamente responsable del crecimiento de la Iglesia. SSCSA CQ Los siglos de la nueva alianza, I, Orientaciones pastorales del bautismo.

346 SSCSA CQ Los siglos de la nueva alianza, IV, Orientaciones pastorales del bautismo; SSCSA CQ Los siglos de la nueva alianza, V, La celebración del bautismo de niños.

347 Schmidt 2015, 233–234.

348 SSCSA CQ Los siglos de la nueva alianza, IV, Orientaciones pastorales del bautismo; SSCSA CQ Los siglos de la nueva alianza, V, La celebración del bautismo de niños.

349 SSCSA CQ Los siglos de la nueva alianza, IV, Orientaciones pastorales del bautismo; SSCSA CQ Los siglos de la nueva alianza, V, La celebración del bautismo de niños.

350 Orsi 2003, 226.

and the Church only by entering the churches: as numerous examples in this research show, spirituality was fostered through culturally transmitted meanings and representations, experiences of kinship and personal encounters, and a sustained sense of self. All these forms of religious expression pertained to the vortex of the revolutionary reality and grew as responses to the social context provided by the revolution.

In terms of lived experience, the struggle for continuity pierced the life of Catholic communities. Meanings for the Church in Cuba were constructed through everyday experiences and life at the grassroots level, and to this reality the continuity of traditions provided a pivotal dimension. Although the public celebration of Christmas had been banned by the government already in 1969,<sup>351</sup> celebrations continued uninterrupted in local communities. For fear of political and social sanctions among Catholic communities, public manifestations were limited, yet they never ceased completely. Communities were celebrating in private, intimate ways: by exchanging season's greetings with close acquaintances, with the little material resources available, and coming together to share the festivities in ecclesial community centers or private homes. Churches and parishes continued to offer Christmas dinners—while food was often scarce, members of the community contributed to the organization through their personal resources. People decorated private homes with Christmas ornaments in subtle ways. In churches, liturgies were prepared with care and meticulous awareness of Vatican II's new teaching on liturgy. Christian proclamation of the birth of the faith's central figure never ceased.<sup>352</sup>

Yet the danger, particularly in the Cuban context of limited Catholic participation in the social sphere, was in becoming immersed in liturgical life at the cost of pastoral and social work: reducing ecclesial life to just the liturgy as an option for avoiding the social and political tensions of the revolution. Liturgy was to be seen as a starting point, from which believers proceeded into homes and onto the streets.<sup>353</sup> The liturgical year was emphasized with particular detail; although Christmas and Easter had been removed from the State calendar, individuals continued to celebrate, and in seminary the feasts were meticulously studied through liturgy and worship. With restricted social visibility, the focus on reflection and contemplation dominated over public witnessing. This sometimes led to an overemphasis on liturgical life by the clergy at moments of increasing demand and pressure for social participation particularly by the laity.

Revision of the liturgy was connected essentially with the reaffirmed importance of teaching the sacraments in daily religiosity for the laity and active and mindful participation of the laity in the liturgy.<sup>354</sup> Piercing through the activities was a sense of limited material resources and decreased public participation, framed by the government's continuous rejection of religiosity. This led local communities to resort to alternative ways to produce resources, and further highlighted the role of the laity. When the public celebration of Easter was no longer allowed, local communities organized the "*Via Crucis* with little leaflets":<sup>355</sup> meditations of the Good

351 Guerra 2012, 2.

352 Interview 23; Interview 24.

353 SSCSA CQ Curso de liturgia, primera parte: historia de la liturgia.

354 SSCSA CQ Otros sacramentos y los sacramentales capt. III; SSCSA CQ Curso de liturgia, primera parte: historia de la liturgia; SSCSA CQ Los signos de la nueva alianza; SSCSA CQ Los signos de la nueva alianza, I, Los sacramentos son signos; SSCSA CQ Los signos de la nueva alianza, II, Los sacramentos son actos de Cristo.

355 *Via Crucis* con papelitos. Interview 23.



Friday and the Stations of the Cross services inside the churches in lieu of public processions on the streets, which had been banned already in 1960.

The *papelitos* of Good Friday also became a symbol of the material scarcity experienced in local communities as a result of the state of Cuba's economy in the late 1970s.<sup>356</sup> The latter half of the decade saw the slowing down of the economy, which resulted in mounting dissatisfaction by citizens and became visible in acts such as theft, personal gain via the misuse of State resources, and crimes against property. Stores offered fewer goods and the lines that Cubans had to stand in grew longer.<sup>357</sup> Catholic courses, workshops, and study groups were also affected by limited access to the means of production or material resources readily available. Sometimes a group of a dozen participants had access to four copies of a book; the rest of the materials needed to organize a course were produced by local clergy and laity, and as the groups were preparing the materials, they faced the severe lack of resources through the limited access of the Church to state-run means of production.<sup>358</sup>

As a solution to not having any material goods accessible for the Catholic communities by trade, some of the laypeople resorted to unofficial sources and were made to balance commitment to ecclesial work with Christian morals.<sup>359</sup> A telling example was witnessed in eastern Cuba, where a laywoman stole paper and ink from her state-run place of work to be used at the church. Forty years later, she still recalled the feelings of fear and guilt, and the fear of sanctions, over stealing from her place of work—and reminisced about silently mumbling the words “God, you know why I am doing this” while smuggling paper and ink out of the factory. She comforted herself by saying that the act was being carried out in the name of God and for the Kingdom of God. Later, the stolen artifacts, with which leaflets for catechesis were printed, were also blessed and consecrated to use by the priest overseeing the production of study materials, to atone for the theft through which the parish came into possession of state-owned resources in the first place.<sup>360</sup>

As the example above suggests, a commitment to the Church created space for small acts of resistance within the revolutionary reality. Aware of the risk of exposure, public chastising, and sanctions, people were nevertheless willing to violate the rules of state-operated workplaces. Through these daily acts of defiance, communities experienced a certain pride in their activities and rose to refute the claims, oftentimes coming from the government or from abroad, that the Church had ceased to exist. Particularly the younger clerics were agitated by the claims that pastoral work and teaching were no longer being carried out on the island. “To say we didn’t offer catechesis, that’s a lie!” proclaimed a cleric active in rural Cuba from the mid-1970s onwards: “Granted, it wasn’t the best; nor was the worst. It was what it was.”<sup>361</sup>

Courses offered by the Church garnered attention in numerous locations on the island. A course planned and organized by a priest in Matanzas raised so much interest that it was reproduced as a touring exhibition in other dioceses as well and served to raise the awareness of

356 Interview 23; Interview 26.

357 Pérez 2015a, 109–110, 272.

358 Interview 23.

359 Scholarly work has proposed that from the 1970s onwards, with the increasing material shortages and the lack of daily goods, pursue of individual gain took the form of misuse of State resources as a widely occurring phenomenon. See Pérez-Stable 2012, 127.

360 Interview 26.

361 Que no había catequesis – ¡mentira! Bueno, no fue lo mejor ni lo peor, “es lo que hay.” Interview 23.

bishops about improving opportunities for adults to study Catholicism. Ecclesiology was identified as a specific field of lay formation, according to Santiago de Cuba's Archbishop Pedro Meurice: central to reinforcing ecclesial agency from within was a renewed understanding of the Church in the light of Vatican II. However, the laity of Santiago de Cuba insisted on first organizing a course on the Bible. In 1977, a course organized for the entire archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba gathered over 1000 people together to study the foundations of Christianity.<sup>362</sup>

In the Diocese of Cienfuegos–Santa Clara, a course entitled “Christ at Home” (*Cristo en la Casa*) introduced laity to the principles of Christology—and stressed, even with its name, that Christ was to be found in the homes of Cubans in the midst of their daily lives.<sup>363</sup> In eastern Cuba, faith was sought in the everyday with a course entitled “Who are you, Jesus of Nazareth?” (*¿Quién eres tú, Jesús de Nazareth?*).<sup>364</sup> The aim of these courses was to introduce “a catechesis incarnated in reality,”<sup>365</sup> responding to the realization of the clergy and laity alike that the Church had to “live within what it [life] was.”<sup>366</sup> These courses fell, by and large, under the responsibility of young diocesan priests, many of them recent graduates from the seminary of *San Carlos y San Ambrosio*, who had since been ordained into the ministry. While the older generation of Cuban clergy did not always agree with the theological and pastoral emphasis of their peers, “they supported us and respected what we were doing” by allowing their young colleagues autonomy and freedom of vision.<sup>367</sup>

Through the courses, the history of the Church was also constructed within a spiritual framework. History, including Cuba's complex past of recent decades, was analyzed from the perspective of God's continuous presence and influence. In this manner, the courses also contributed to renewed historical awareness through an interpretation of the past from the present. As one of several examples, the efforts in Santiago de Cuba show how Catholics were both crafting their own relation to the past and contesting the established historiographical paradigms of the revolutionary process by arguing for transcendent realities on the island.<sup>368</sup> Through the analysis, clergy and laypeople began to draft new interpretations of recent history and their own experiences. This also contributed to contesting visions of the past within the revolutionary reality, as accounts of the revolution's history were studied with an interpretation of a transcendent presence in the course of the past. Furthermore, reinterpretations of the past were constructed with a conviction of contemporary divine providence, actively intervening in the daily course of life in Cuba as the Catholic community attempted to reorient itself and transition from the past to the future.

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362 Interview 23.

363 Interview 23.

364 APJV *¿Quién eres tú, Jesús de Nazareth?* Cursillo teológico, Diócesis de Oriente.

365 Catequesis encarnada en la realidad. Interview 23.

366 Vivir dentro de lo que hay. Interview 23.

367 Los mayores nos apoyaron y respetaron lo que hicimos. Interview 23.

368 For instance, APJV Cursillo teológico “El Pueblo de la Nueva Alianza en la Historia”, Archidiócesis de Santiago de Cuba; APJV *¿Quién eres tú, Jesús de Nazareth?* Cursillo teológico, Diócesis de Oriente: Motivaciones existenciales de nuestro curso.

## 6. Discussion

As this chapter showed, the 1970s became a decade of increasing social consciousness, multiplying visions, and internal discourse for the Cuban Church. New forms of religious activities were developed in the everyday, through quotidian acts and spurred by necessity. As the decade also began to reveal the declining awareness and knowledge of Catholicism in the public sphere, education and the formation of both laypeople and future clerics became central to the Church's agenda of renewal. As was discussed within the reflection of 1969, several ecclesial groups were negotiating the experiences of the recent years from a multitude of perspectives.

The Cuban everyday, life in the revolutionary reality, placed the laity in a particular role as a bridge from Church to society. By the late 1970s, the laity had begun to mature in their self-identification regarding both the Church and the revolution. A similar process occurred among the young generation of Cuban seminarians and clergy: their growth towards autonomy in the Church mirrored the changing perspectives on accommodation and integration with respect to participation in the revolutionary society. A recurring theme of the decade was exchange with Latin American Catholicism. While members of both the clergy and laity found inspiration in liberation theology, the Church as an institution tried to strike a balance between exploring Latin American theology and remaining loyal to the Holy See.

Both the archival sources and interviews analyzed in this chapter offer a rich display of the spectrum along which the Church facilitated discourse on the state of ecclesial life on the island in the 1970s, although the discourse was rarely acknowledged in public and has largely been ignored in scholarly work as well. The paradigmatic construction of episodic silence has also been reinforced by the Cuban State and government in the revolution's established historiography. The limited knowledge about ecclesial life mirrors the general state of scholarship: on the whole, the 1970s still remains an understudied era of the Cuban revolution.

With respect to ecclesial histories, the archival silence has prevailed for post-1959 histories until this study, linking the significance of the exceptional 1969 outbursts closely to the paradigm of the Cuban Church as a globally isolated community, cemented in pre-conciliar theology and pastoral work within the revolutionary confines of silence. In this paradigm, the life and discourses of the Cuban Church in the revolution do not represent a continuity but rather a fragmentary compilation of episodes in Church–State relations, frozen in time in the watershed moment of 1960 and the marginalization of normative ecclesial voices on the island. This paradigm, buttressed by the silence of archives, does not account for an evolving discourse and exchange within the Church, but rather treats the publications of 1969 as singularities without any preceding discourse by the Church to pave the way for the statements as markers of public participation and exchange.

What has remained unacknowledged and understudied, until now, is the continuing intra-ecclesial discourse and agency, reflections on the evolving revolutionary reality, and engaging in a process of active meaning-making of the experiences of the preceding years. Yet as this chapter showed, within the confines of ecclesial spheres, the courses of both the Cuban revolution and global Catholicism were closely examined, discussed, and interpreted. With a close analysis of the 1970s as an era of active ecclesial discussions, manifold interpretations and visions, and emerging resources for continuous daily work, the life of the Church became con-

spicuous at the grassroots level and in the everyday. In the spaces and sites providing for encounter and exchange, Catholics engaged in daily life with a distinct sense of identification as a minority within the social structures of the revolution. This ultimately showed how Catholicism and, most importantly, Cuban Catholics were not isolated from the daily revolutionary experience. They stood in long lines and lived with the scarcity of material goods; they discussed the realities of their daily surroundings and struggled to reconcile both spirituality and Catholic social doctrine with the revolutionary framework of the everyday.

## VI TOWARDS RECONCILIATION: 1979–1986

### 1. Everyday Signs of Change

In 1979, Havana's auxiliary bishop, Fernando Azcárate, and his fellow priests gathered in the village of El Cobre in southern Cuba. In the national sanctuary of Cuban Catholics, home to *Nuestra Señora de La Virgen de la Caridad's* shrine, Azcárate vocalized a thought that had been in the minds of many. In a meeting of clergy, reflecting on Latin American theology discussed at the third general meeting of CELAM earlier that year, the same priest who had 14 years earlier reported with a joyful tone from Rome to Havana on the rise of the laity in conciliar theology, suggested that it was now time for the Cuban Church to engage in profound self-reflection on its way to renewal.<sup>1</sup> The initiative by Azcárate reflected a deeper readiness for change gaining momentum within the Church: among the clergy, religious orders and laity, an overarching sentiment in the late 1970s was the need for a newly defined engagement in the Cuban reality.

The vision also coincided with a new opening in Cuba–U.S. relations: the dialogue established by Fidel Castro and the first visits of Cubans in the United States to the island. The evolving Cuba–U.S. dialogue provided the Church with new confidence since the revolution also seemed to be engaging in self-development through the further inclusion of new social actors. Already in 1978, the Episcopal Conference had voiced its approval of and motivation to support efforts at rapprochement between “the children of this land, of the Mother of God, *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*.”<sup>2</sup> The same year, government officials and Cuban exiles convened for *El Diálogo*, meetings and discussions symbolizing the rapprochement. The following year, 100,000 Cuban Americans visited the island.<sup>3</sup> From the United States to Cuba, the Episcopal Conference encouraged visits of family members, increased exchange based on shared national and patriotic sentiments, and established reconciliatory dialogue for healing the past wounds of exile and immigration. A particular point of encounter from Cuba to the United States was identified in the release of political prisoners on the island on the condition that they leave Cuba: the bishops appealed to the United States to receive the former inmates and their families and contribute to their rehabilitation.<sup>4</sup>

By 1979, Azcárate was not alone as a cleric urging more open Catholic exposure to the public and a restructuring of the Church's understanding of its role on the island. Numerous interviewees also testified to the young generations of seminarians and clergy discussing similar initiatives in the preceding years.<sup>5</sup> As the earlier initiatives for a national process of self-development had either seemed more utopian than possible given the social and political conditions on the island, or else had been dismissed by peers with opposing visions, they had not come to flourish. At the meeting in El Cobre, however, Azcárate's proposal sparked an interest in a

1 APMC ENEC Documento del Trabajo; AOH REC Primeros pasos; AOH ENEC Ciclo 10: “El Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano”; Adolfo Rodríguez 17.2.1987.

2 Declaración 21.11.1978.

3 Torres 2001, 94–98; Pedraza 2007, 145–147, 151; Pérez-Stable 2012, 121–122.

4 Declaración 21.11.1978.

5 Interview 2; Interview 5; Interview 23; Interview 24.

group of clerics and began to take shape.<sup>6</sup> Further contributing to the new movement within the Church were changes in the ecclesial hierarchy in 1979: the appointment of Jaime Ortega as the bishop of Pinar del Río, the creation of a new diocese in Holguín—with Héctor Peña Gómez as the bishop—and the arrival of a new apostolic nuncio, Giuseppe Laigueglia.<sup>7</sup>

Remarkably, in the interviews the younger clergy and laity are credited with taking such initiatives, suggesting an active and mutual exchange of ideas and aspirations for the future between them.<sup>8</sup> A similar conclusion has been drawn by Pedraza.<sup>9</sup> Among the Cuban clergy, the most prominent figures advocating for change were the recently ordained young priests. They had attended seminary in the early and mid-1970s, in the era when conciliar theology had first arrived and become the main focus of the seminary's curricula. Many of them had attended the classes taught by visionary teachers, who had challenged them to ask how the council could take shape in Cuba. They had been the first generation of theologians to study the ideas of liberation theology. With their superiors and peers, the younger generation of Cuban-born theologians had begun to explore ways for the Church to move forward in the prevailing social and ecclesial circumstances on the island. The process initiated at the El Cobre meeting was the culmination of their training and a sign of changing times.

In 1979, behind Azcárate's initiative was the experience of Puebla.<sup>10</sup> Earlier the same year, Latin American bishops had gathered for CELAM's third general assembly in the city of Puebla, in Mexico. In the meeting, the Latin American Church had confirmed and renewed its commitment to the prevailing social realities of the region and again pronounced the Preferential Option for the Poor as its founding principle. Yet at the same time, CELAM had revoked liberation theology, with the support of the Holy See and Vatican-centered theological frameworks, and it had scaled back the more political interpretations of Latin American Catholicism. In Cuba, the voices from Puebla had been listened to attentively: as phrased by a Cuban priest participating in the assembly, a takeaway for Cubans from Puebla was the need to integrate an in-depth understanding of prevailing social realities into the mission of the Church on the island.<sup>11</sup>

The Cuban initiative was also a counter-reaction to Puebla, emerging from the disappointment of the Cuban Church at yet again becoming excluded from Latin American Catholic discourse. The general conclusions of the meeting were neither influenced by Cuban voices nor corresponded to the reality of the Church in Cuba. Discourse voiced in Puebla did not carry immediate relevance in the Cuban context: both Cuban participants in the meeting and the groups of clergy and laity examining the discourse from Cuba were irritated by not feeling fully represented and acknowledged in the Puebla meeting's final document. According to them, the Cuban situation was not reflected on the pages of the concluding document of the assembly nor in the theological reflection provided by CELAM. For these reasons, Cuba's national synod emerged as much a counter-response to as a reflection of CELAM's orientation in Puebla.<sup>12</sup>

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6 Adolfo Rodríguez 17.2.1987.

7 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Obispos. See also Appendix 1.

8 For instance, Interview 5; Interview 24.

9 Pedraza 2007, 244.

10 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Carlos Amigo Vallejo 7.11.1985.

11 COCC TPR Para una teología y pastoral de reconciliación desde Cuba.

12 AHAH ENEC Preparación ENEC: Santa Clara; Interview 4; Interview 6; Interview 8.

From these experiences emerged a vision of a Cuban *Pueblita*, little Puebla: a local synod for the Church to reflect on and relate to what was pronounced in Puebla. The vision of *Pueblita* provided a framework for and took concrete shape in *Reflexión Eclesial Cubana*, commonly referred to by its Spanish abbreviation REC. In both documentary sources and interviews, the process was repeatedly referred to as the “Puebla for Cuba”<sup>13</sup>—a national process of reflection bringing the Church up to date with the currents of post-conciliar global Catholicism. Remarkably, the third general assembly of the Latin American Episcopal Conference served as the closest reference point instead of any European process. The significance of Puebla as an immediate experience also surpassed the prestige of Medellín, organized a decade earlier and still marking a turning point in Latin American Catholic discourse.

To begin the reflection, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference created a preparatory committee presided over by Adolfo Rodríguez, with a clerical representative from each of the seven dioceses, in 1980.<sup>14</sup> Yet the reality on the island dramatically postponed the implementation of the plan, as the year posed an unprecedented challenge for the Cuban government and permanently altered the revolutionary experience on the island.<sup>15</sup> The course of the revolution became irreversibly marked by the chaotic exodus of Cubans from the island known as the Mariel Boatlift: a flotilla exodus that resulted in 124,789 Cubans arriving in the United States between April and September of 1980.<sup>16</sup> A particular impulse behind the mass exodus was the experience of dialogue and family visits in 1978–1979, strongly supported by the Catholic Church in Cuba: in contrast to the Cuban government’s claims, the visits to the island had portrayed life in the United States as an opportunity for prosperity and success. Also, in contrast to preceding waves of immigration, people now had permission to leave through a port in the town of Mariel, issued by the Cuban government. The government especially forced “antisocial elements” of Cuban society to leave the island: prisoners, mental patients, and homosexuals.<sup>17</sup>

The experience at Mariel posed several challenges for ecclesial life on the island. Since both clergy and laity were leaving Cuba, the Church was compelled to address the issue from its perspective. Episcopal guidelines on the Mariel Boatlift addressed the accelerating crisis of Cubans leaving the island, but they were issued strictly for the private use of the clergy and religious orders.<sup>18</sup> The bishops exhorted clergy and religious orders to focus on grassroots advocacy and the strengthening of local communities. For those considering leaving the island, the clergy should provide counseling. At the same time, the ecclesial leadership recognized that not only the laity was contemplating whether to stay in Cuba or to leave: the bishops directed their words at the clergy and members of religious orders who were themselves considering emigration. They urged individuals to judge the situation in light of the Gospel and the commitment of Christians to their faith and the *patria*: a commitment made more challenging by

13 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Carlos Amigo Vallejo 7.11.1985.

14 AOH ENEC Ciclo 10: “El Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano.”

15 Pedraza 2007, 147; Pérez-Stable 2012, 121.

16 Pedraza 2007, 151–152; Pérez-Stable 2012, 121–122.

17 Torres 2001, 105–108; Pedraza 2007, 151–152; Pérez-Stable 2012, 121–122.

18 COCC IEC A los sacerdotes, religiosos y religiosas: Ante el hecho del éxodo de cubanos por Pedro Meurice Estiú 28.4.1980.

temporal circumstances yet central to faith.<sup>19</sup> Coinciding with the ecclesial leadership's statements, the government instigated repudiation meetings and demonstrations, and those planning to leave were publicly chastised. *Gusanos*<sup>20</sup> were again identified and called out.<sup>21</sup> However, it is noteworthy, as pointed out by Tweed, that among *marielitos*, there were a significantly lower number of Catholics than in previous waves of migration.<sup>22</sup>

While publicly maintaining that religion should not be a decisive factor for migration, communities were instructed by the episcopate to emphasize staying on the island as a religious, spiritual commitment.<sup>23</sup> A shared sentiment was that religion should not constitute the primary motivation for migration. Emphasizing the decision to leave as a personal choice of individuals, the episcopate recognized "the rights of every citizen to stay in Cuba or immigrate to other countries for a variety of reasons, both human and supernatural," yet also claimed that it rejoiced in "the freely made choice of those who stay."<sup>24</sup> At the same time, as discussed by Schmidt, an increased number of Cubans visited the national shrine of *La Virgen de La Caridad* as a pilgrimage site, giving thanks for their family members' safe arrival in Miami<sup>25</sup>, thus connecting the religious world to the world of emigration.

The foundational experience of immigration, inevitably connecting Cuba and the United States, has been discussed in depth in prior scholarship.<sup>26</sup> The ongoing experience of both the revolution and Cuban Catholicism since 1959 shaped a dualistic idea of Cubanness: the layered accounts of *Cuba de ayer*, before the revolution, and *Cuba de hoy*, Cuba in the revolution, evinced nostalgia and longing on both sides of the Florida Straits, with unceasing comparison of the similarities and differences feeding each other.<sup>27</sup> For the Cuban Church, the connections established and maintained between the two realities also became transformed into an extended sense of spirituality: Cuban Catholicism on the island and in the diaspora. As Tweed and Pedraza, among others, have proposed, a particular spiritual vein connecting Cuba and the United States was the shared devotion to *La Virgen de La Caridad* as the nation's mother and patron.<sup>28</sup> Yet at the same time, the political and politicized dimension of Catholicism for Cubans for whom religion was a factor in the decision to leave the island encountered the politically

19 COCC IEC A los sacerdotes, religiosos y religiosas: Ante el hecho del éxodo de cubanos por Pedro Meurice Estiú 28.4.1980.

20 The changing use of the term opens a window into the exile politics in the revolution: during *El Dialógo*, Fidel Castro had momentarily proposed *comunidad* to be used as an expression replacing *gusano* as a reference to the Cubans in the United States. Torres 2001, 98.

21 Torres 2001, 108; Pedraza 2007, 217, 219; Pérez-Stable 2012, 122.

22 Whether this was because fewer Catholics left the island in 1980 or because less publicly affiliating Catholics were left in Cuba to migrate, is not discussed by Tweed 1997. Smith & Padula point out that 70% of *marielitos* were men, which offers one explanation for the low number of publicly identifying Catholics in the cohort. Smith & Padula 1996, 148. Another explanation offered by Clark is that a significant proportion of *marielitos* were practitioners of *santería*, the Afro-Cuban religion of Yoruba origin. See Clark 2007, 27. For more information on *santería*, see also Clark 2005.

23 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Laicado, 312 Conciencia identidad cubana.

24 El derecho que cada ciudadano de permanecer en Cuba o emigrar a otros países por diversas motivaciones, tanto humanas como sobrenaturales; se alegra por la libre opción de los que permanecen. COCC IEC A los sacerdotes, religiosos y religiosas: Ante el hecho del éxodo de cubanos por Pedro Meurice Estiú 28.4.1980; AHAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Acción profética: Laicado – actuar – 4. Pág. 8; AHAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Acción Profética Problemas S/N Pág. 1.

25 Schmidt 2015, 242.

26 See, for example, Pedraza 2007, 151–152.

27 De La Torre 2002, 108; Pérez 2015a, 265–266.

28 Tweed 1997, 83–98; Pedraza 2007, 262.



charged Catholic thought in the diaspora, further distancing the distinct Catholic realities from each other.<sup>29</sup>

While the experience of Mariel made visible the dualistic reality of Catholicism *aquí y allá*,<sup>30</sup> together with the religious considerations on emigration, the episcopate was becoming increasingly focused on new openings in ecclesial life on the island. According to them, the participation of the laity was gaining quality and depth, as local communities were becoming more engaged in liturgical life and worship, providing for a stronger attachment to the Church as an institution. Most importantly, bishops estimated that local groups had been able to establish communities with profound internal solidarity.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, the small groups of dedicated laity put further emphasis on the great number of publicly unaffiliated Cubans occasionally engaging with the Church. Their reality, as perceived from within the Church, was discussed by Meurice regarding the resources of pastoral work:

We bishops are concerned for the great number of Christians who occasionally come to the temple, who occasionally request sacraments or requiems for the deceased, who participate in the celebrations or pilgrimages, but whom we are unable to serve for the lack of resources: priests and members of religious orders of sufficient numbers, or means of communication such as press, radio, and television. -- These are frequent topics in our conversations and meetings.<sup>32</sup>

At the turn of the 1980s, bishops underlined that progress had been made in the general climate of coexistence among revolutionaries and Catholics—according to them, a growing number of Cubans were reaching out towards the Church after two decades of distancing themselves from it.<sup>33</sup> In their view, the progress was in great part due to improvements in inter-ecclesial resources. In ecclesial education, the priority placed on the formation of future priests and human resources of the seminary was coming to fruition. The number of ordinations of Cuban seminarians into the ministry was increasing steadily, and although the Church still suffered from a lack of priests, newly ordained clergy opened hopeful prospects for the future of the seminary. Local ordinations also provided the Church with Cuban natives in the ministry, which was considered crucial for pastoral work and social participation.<sup>34</sup>

The unfolding Church–State dynamics, catalyzed by the Church’s proactivity and the government’s strategic rapprochement<sup>35</sup> together with the inclusion of new institutions in the

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29 Tweed 1997 discusses Cuban Catholicism in the diaspora with the case of *Nuestra Señora de La Caridad*’s shrine located in Miami and the devotional practices of Cubans at the shrine. Tweed’s overarching argument is the close connection of diasporic nationalism and the Catholic devotion by Cubans in Miami. See also De La Torre 2002, 84–85.

30 “Here and there” is a common reference to the dualistic experience of Cubans on the island and in the diaspora. Interview 6.

31 COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estú 9.5.1981.

32 A los obispos cubanos nos preocupa un número grande de cristianos que asisten alguna que otra vez al templo, que piden ocasionalmente los sacramentos, misas por sus difuntos, que acuden los días de fiestas o peregrinación, pero a los que no podemos atender como es debido por carecer de recursos: sacerdotes y religiosas en número suficiente, o medios de comunicación, como con la imprenta, la radio, la televisión. - - Estos temas son materia frecuente en nuestras conversaciones y encuentros. COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estú 9.5.1981.

33 COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estú 9.5.1981.

34 COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estú 9.5.1981.

35 Internal correspondence of MINREX shows that the Cuban government had been informed on the European currents of Catholic theology exploring dialogue with Marxism already in the 1960s by Cuba’s ambassador to the Holy See, Luis Amado-Blanco, in his regular reports. In the correspondence of 1967, Cuba was presented by

revolutionary process, paved the way for what Fernández calls a renaissance of religious organizations in Cuba.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, the Cuban government acquired new perspectives on the exchange between the revolution and religion through the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979 and the influential role Catholics played in the Sandinista regime.<sup>37</sup> On an individual level, Padura Fuentes refers to the rehabilitation of citizens formerly marginalized for numerous reasons, such as for being practicing Christians, from the early 1980s onwards.<sup>38</sup>

With the increasing activity within the Church and signs of rapprochement from the government emerging into the public sphere, relations between Church and State began to generate increasing interest in the international press and among foreign visitors. Also, a rumored visit by Pope John Paul II, elected to the papacy in 1978, was seen as a sign of the global significance of the Cuban situation.<sup>39</sup> Yet the interest from abroad repeatedly confirmed for Cuban bishops and clergy their perception that little was understood of the internal dynamics of the revolution outside the island, which further contributed to a prevailing experience of the exclusion of the Cuban Church from the global Catholic community.

Archbishop Pedro Meurice pointedly stated<sup>40</sup> that global interest in Cuban Church–State relations was often framed with a hypothesis that similar patterns would follow within international socialism or at least in other Latin American countries. Yet the experiences of Cuban Catholics differed radically from the paradigms through which foreigners viewed the Cuban situation, even those belonging to the Catholic hierarchy.<sup>41</sup> It is noteworthy that Meurice’s criticism was directed equally at all those outside the revolutionary reality: from Catholic communities in Latin America, Europe, and the United States to Cuban exile communities, both friends and opponents of the revolution. This provides a striking window into the Cuban Catholic experience of being neglected and misinterpreted from all directions.

Reinforced by the experience of Cuban Catholicism being misrepresented in the global context, the Church increasingly focused on local circumstances. Among the priests invested in crafting a new perspective on the Cuban reality was Father René David, known as a professor of the *San Carlos y San Ambrosio* seminary. In November 1981, he outlined a theological proposal entitled *Para una teología y pastoral de reconciliación desde Cuba* (“For a theology and pastoral vision of reconciliation from Cuba”).<sup>42</sup> Although never officially named a reflexive

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Amado-Blanco as a potential forerunner of merging Marxist and Christian thought in a revolutionary setting. ACMINREX SS Luis Amado-Blanco y Fernández to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores 3.3.1967.

36 Fernández 2008, 95.

37 Tombs 2002, 231–234; De La Torre 2002, 101.

38 Padura Fuentes 2008, 349.

39 COCC CP Prensa Latina / Jaime Ortega Alamino 26.12.1981. The visit was realized in 1998.

40 The statement was emblematic of the general pastoral vision of Meurice, whom Pedraza characterizes as a people’s bishop “for being the sole member of the church hierarchy [in Cuba] to play a combative role.” Pedraza 2007, 245–246.

41 COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estú 9.5.1981.

42 The most significant references in the theological outlines of René David’s proposal were the biblical foundations of reconciliation, Vatican II, Pope Paul VI’s discourse “Human rights and reconciliation” in 1976, liberation theologians, such as Segundo Galilea, and Pope John Paul II. He also referred to certain Church Fathers, such as Saint Ambrose, John Chrysostom, and Saint Thomas Aquinas. From the Cuban revolutionary leadership, René David cited Fidel Castro and Che Guevara.

framework of the Cuban Church,<sup>43</sup> the vision influenced the clergy in particular and corresponded to the vision provided by him for the younger generation of theologians through the interpretative process of Vatican II at the seminary.

In his work, René David proposed and outlined a path of dialogue for the Cuban Church in the revolutionary reality. Theologically grounded, the vision built on the personal responsibility of Cuban Catholics to initiate and seek reconciliation with communists. Despite acknowledging the utopian prospects of reconciliation in the revolutionary reality, René David urged Catholics to consider reconciliation a duty of Christians. As reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ was at the center of Christian faith, motivation to reconcile among people was its necessary consequence. Yet reconciliation was considered a process; it did not amount to straightening out differences and obstacles of communion, but patient rapprochement through establishing common ground despite persistent binaries.<sup>44</sup>

In René David's vision, the frameworks of liberation theology were inextricably present: it took as its presupposition the determination of Cuban Catholics to assimilate into the revolutionary process and actively participate in the deconstruction of classes, property, and privilege. In this vision, the legacy of liberation theology was clearly contesting the boundaries of Catholic identification, offering both clergy and laity the option of open support for the social agenda of the Cuban government. Criticizing both the global Catholic Church and the Cuban State for juxtaposing religion and communism, René David suggested that in spirit the two were not as incompatible as had been portrayed. In doing so, he appeared as a voice of realism for some and provocation for others. By establishing a discourse on the acceptable degree of integration, René David also made visible the diversity of the existing lines of theological and political thought within the Cuban Church.

In Cuba, a requirement for reconciliation between the polarized social groups in the revolution was overcoming the binaries generated by fear and mutual suspicion. Father René David posed bold questions for both Catholics and communists to consider:

We also lack the strength to overcome the paralyzing [effect] of fear. Is it Christian to fear communism when it sterilizes the attempts at reconciliation? And we could ask from our communist brothers and sisters: is it revolutionary to fear dialogue with Christians? "Fear is a bad advisor," says the proverb, and we could add that it is also conservative.<sup>45</sup>

Reconciliation did not equal identification. René David was in search of coexistence, not the simplified Christianization of Cuban communists. He required the same from revolutionaries: acknowledgment of Catholics as citizens integrated into the revolutionary process as Catholics, not communists. Yet political alignment was also a free choice for believers, René David emphasized, suggesting that Cuban Catholics could also identify as revolutionaries and communists. He further called on communists to recognize spirituality as a foundational element of

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43 For a theological discussion on reconciliation as a framework for self-identification and missionary discourse in the Cuban Church, with a particular focus on the laity, see Cabrera García 2003.

44 APJFPR TPR Para una teología y pastoral de reconciliación desde Cuba.

45 Hace falta también un esfuerzo para superar lo que tiene de paralizante el miedo. ¿Es cristiano un miedo al comunismo, que esteriliza toda preocupación reconciliadora? Y podríamos preguntar a los hermanos comunistas: ¿es revolucionario el temor al diálogo con los cristianos? "El temor es un mal consejero", dice el refrán, y podríamos añadir, es conservador. APJFPR TPR Para una teología y pastoral de reconciliación desde Cuba.

humanity,<sup>46</sup> despite the materialism of Marxism-Leninism proposing an antithesis to a spiritual understanding of life. Audaciously countering the paradigm, Father René David pointed to paradoxes in the internal logic of Cuban revolutionary ideology building simultaneously on transcendental narratives of the revolution and Marxist atheism:

Communists could recognize, at least, the openness of humankind to the Transcendent, indirectly expressed in phrases such as “We have created a revolution larger than ourselves” or “Men die, the Party is immortal,” and consider it erroneous to think that religion, rooted in human nature, must disappear. This error, that as such cannot be beneficial for a socialism that aspires to be scientific and realistic, they could admit without giving up on being revolutionaries. - - <sup>47</sup>

Referencing the repeating ideals of the revolution, the discourse contested the presupposition of institutional atheism as an integral dimension of Cuba’s official ideology, alluding to communist militants “who claim to be atheists” to qualify as revolutionaries.<sup>48</sup> As a Catholic voice on the island, René David’s vision was pioneering in its attempt to critically address the atheism inscribed in Marxist ideology and assumed as an institutionalized framework of the Cuban revolution. As such, it represented a discourse from within the revolution, embedded in identification with the Cuban revolutionary process, yet providing a candid critique of the binaries constructed by both communists and Catholics. With a direct reference to the revolution’s evolving reflection on past mistakes, René David suggested that institutional atheism should be included in the policies of the revolution in need of rectification. As the evolving discourse on Catholic socio-politics shows, rectification also began to influence Church–State relations and the binaries issued between Catholics and communists in the revolutionary reality.

Laypeople publicly addressing the role of Catholics in the everyday of the revolution also contested the binaries. In June 1982, Francisco Figueroa Lombillo, a 40-year-old resident of Bahía Honda in the Diocese of Pinar del Río, wrote to his bishop, José Siro González. In his letter, Figueroa Lombillo described in detail a course of events that he believed constituted a case of discrimination at his workplace on the grounds of religious conviction. Appealing to the Constitution of 1976 and its discussion of the freedom of religion, Figueroa Lombillo was about to file an official complaint about the events and wished to make his case known to the diocese since he had been “a member of the ecclesial family of the village since 1955.”<sup>49</sup> He did not ask the bishop to intervene or mediate in any manner, but instead offered information on the course of action he was to take.

Figueroa Lombillo, who was working in municipal education, wrote about a secret meeting his colleagues had organized to discuss his religious beliefs. According to the summary of events that had later been relayed to Figueroa Lombillo himself, his colleagues had declared

46 APJFPR TPR Para una teología y pastoral de reconciliación desde Cuba.

47 Los comunistas podrían reconocer, al menos, esa apertura del hombre a la Trascendencia, expresada indirectamente en frases como estas: “Hemos hecho una revolución más grande que nosotros”, o “Los hombres mueren, el Partido es inmortal”; y considerar que es un error pensar que la religión, enraizada en la misma naturaleza humana, ha de desaparecer un día. Ese error, que, como tal, no puede ser beneficio a un socialismo que quiere ser científico y realista, lo podrían reconocer sin dejar de ser revolucionarios. - - APJFPR TPR Para una teología y pastoral de reconciliación desde Cuba.

48 APJFPR TPR Para una teología y pastoral de reconciliación desde Cuba.

49 Miembro de la familia parroquial de este pueblo desde el año 1955. ACOPR CDFFL Francisco Figueroa Lombillo to Mons. Siro González 4.6.1982.

their mistrust in him. According to what Figueroa Lombillo had learned, his coworkers suspected that he “never agreed with what he was working on in the field of education,” on the grounds of him “being a Catholic and also taking care of the notice board of the Church.”<sup>50</sup> In his own words, Figueroa Lombillo was having trouble understanding how his commitment and loyalty to education could be questioned, since he had strived to “give the best of my efforts to the society I live in,”<sup>51</sup> and since “according to the laws of our country, us Catholics are not incapable of exercising any administrative duties as long as we comply with our duties in society and labor.”<sup>52</sup> Yet, Figueroa Lombillo also noted that he had been defended by some of his colleagues, among them militants of *Union de Jóvenes Comunistas*, who had criticized the incorrect procedure, namely the covert action taken by Figueroa Lombillo’s peers without his knowledge and opportunity to respond to the accusations.<sup>53</sup>

The case of Figueroa Lombillo was but one of the many ongoing episodes of the late 1970s and early 1980s emphasizing the awakening of Catholic consciousness of an individual’s rights and the consequent demand for public respect for religion in the revolution. Public, state-run workplaces, schools, and hospitals had become sites of encounter and exchange for practicing lay Catholics and militant communists. While the Church saw the encounter as an opportunity to improve the public image of laypeople in social engagement, their presence was marked by suspicion, prejudice, and expressions of daily discrimination. The story of Figueroa Lombillo also suggests that some individual Catholics supposedly did not abide by the status quo of complying with the revolutionary reality. Through their words and actions, they publicly manifested their faith and defied the expectation of a quiet, invisible, profoundly privatized form of religiosity. Their acts became individual manifestations of resistance, creating space for debate and discourse at the intersections of religion and the revolution.

The case cast further light on the boundaries of Catholic civic participation in labor. In the early 1980s, the Christian ideal of work, as discussed in the preceding decade within the Church through the emerging social consciousness of the laity, was becoming merged with a revolutionary understanding of it. Labor was identified as a shared value<sup>54</sup> of Marxist-Leninist society and the Christian faith, thus providing a site of encounter in the construction of a better society. This encounter was seen as a way to smooth over the suspicion and mistrust of Christians through their commitment to work.<sup>55</sup> Work was emphasized as a privilege for the integral development of individuals, producing new sincere relationships and opening up new perspectives on improving living conditions on the island; for Christians, it was a site of encounter and a platform for a *testimonio* of altruism, generosity, and sincerity, enabling dialogue on a one-

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50 Que nunca estuvo de acuerdo en que yo trabaje en Educación porque soy católico y que además actualizo los murales de la iglesia. ACOPR CDFFL Francisco Figueroa Lombillo to Mons. Siro González 4.6.1982.

51 Dar lo mejor de mi esfuerzo a la sociedad en que vivo. ACOPR CDFFL Francisco Figueroa Lombillo to Mons. Siro González 4.6.1982.

52 Según las leyes de nuestro país los católicos no estamos inválidos para ejercer ningún cargo administrativo siempre que cumplamos nuestros deberes en el orden social y laboral. ACOPR CDFFL Francisco Figueroa Lombillo to Mons. Siro González 4.6.1982.

53 ACOPR CDFFL Francisco Figueroa Lombillo to Mons. Siro González 4.6.1982.

54 See Appendix 3, picture 7.

55 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA No creyentes J–351–352 Trabajo, medio de hacer comunión; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA No. 2 Realidad social; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA No. 25 Participación; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA No. 2 Realidad social.

to-one basis.<sup>56</sup> This vision resonated strongly with the early revolutionary rhetoric on work as a space for personal abnegation, voluntarism, and individual sacrifice for the greater good.<sup>57</sup> Yet in Catholic thought, the spiritual dimension of work surpassed the revolutionary ethos: as a dimension of faith, work served as an act of spirituality in the construction of the common good and transcendent kingdom in temporal circumstances.<sup>58</sup>

The discourse on work as a shared value in the revolutionary reality enables a perspective on the manifold exchanges between religion and the revolution in the construction of Cuban Catholic spirituality. As Orsi suggests, lived religion also proposes a rethinking of what constitutes religion, what it means to be religious, and how they are manifested in constant interaction with the profane, such as the revolutionary framework in Cuba. According to Orsi, religion comes into being, is lived and expressed, through an ongoing, dynamic relationship with the realities of everyday life.<sup>59</sup> In Cuba, an illustrative example of this is the spirituality conveyed through work and labor. As was repeatedly discussed by lay Catholics in particular, daily dedication to the state-sanctioned requirements for work allowed for the inclusion of spirituality and religious practices at workplaces. In this manner, religion became both embedded in and expressed through places where it had been excluded from, and it interacted directly with the profane domains institutionally negating its presence.

Alongside the new ideals of a Catholic work ethic in the revolutionary reality, cases like Figueroa Lombillo's directed the ecclesial hierarchy to address more directly issues of daily experience. Already in 1981, the year before Figueroa Lombillo's case, both Pedro Meurice Estiú and Havana's newly appointed archbishop, Jaime Ortega Alamino, had called for giving public attention to the grassroots level of tension in Church–State relations. Both had discussed the experiences of lay Catholics in workplaces as they were relayed to them as the superior of the diocese. According to the bishops, the daily duties of the diocesan clergy included counseling and intermediation for laypeople in cases of discrimination in public life.<sup>60</sup> The lived reality claimed its authority for shaping and explaining the experience of the Church; as the People of God began to include laypeople and their experiences, voices from the grassroots level began to redirect the Church in its self-assessment. While the pre-conciliar Church had been remarkably cleric-centric, the post-Vatican II and Medellín Church no longer could avoid discussing the role of the laity at the junction of ecclesial institutions and civic participation.

Despite legislation, in daily life Catholics were still defined through their disenfranchisement with the revolution. According to the bishops, the legislation on religious freedom did not penetrate all sectors of society. Even though the leadership of the revolution emphasized tolerance of religion as a constitutional right, the attitudes of municipal and local administrators were still dismissive of or negative towards Catholics, which particularly affected Catholics at schools and workplaces. It was a daily reality faced in particular by the laity; the clergy seemed to operate on a more institutional level within State policy.<sup>61</sup> The same argument had been made

56 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Trabajadores, V–5 p. 34 Responsabilidad trabajo; AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Líneas de Fuerza # 11 y 12 Comunión no creyentes.

57 Pérez 2015a, 270.

58 Comunicado 10.4.1969.

59 Orsi 2010, xxxi–xxxii, xxxix.

60 COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estiú 9.5.1981.

61 COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estiú 9.5.1981.

by Havana's lay leaders already in the mid-1960s, but it had taken years for the leadership of the Church to fully understand and accept the binaries in experiences within the Church.

The episcopate invested in reinforcing distinctively Catholic narratives on the progress of Church–State relations. The experiences of the laity were publicly explored by Jaime Ortega after he was appointed Havana's archbishop in 1981, promoted from his former episcopal position in Pinar del Río. Emphasizing the role of the laity in social participation, Ortega claimed it was instrumental for Catholics to assume active agency in the social and economic development of their fatherland, with a role in the evolving histories of the Cuban people as individuals embedded within a concrete historical context. Ortega described the life of laypeople through reference to *la lucha*, which had come to signify a shared struggle in everyday life faced by all Cubans.<sup>62</sup> In this sense, lay Catholics integrated into the daily realities and shared the experiences of militant communists.

Through the shared daily realities, relations of the Church and State were in a process of rapprochement, claimed Santiago de Cuba's Archbishop Pedro Meurice. A climate of dialogue had surpassed the conflict that had arisen with "the Cuban State that [had] turned into tyranny after the first year of the revolution."<sup>63</sup> Despite the prevailing, unnegotiable differences between Christianity and Marxism in their perception of the world and humankind, both of the ideologies ultimately correspondent to the wellbeing of humanity in the world. This, according to Meurice, was sufficient common ground upon which the Church and State could cooperate in Cuba. Yet Meurice was also clear in his statement that despite discernment of a common ground, the improvement in relations did not straightforwardly amount to the disappearance of complexity, dispute, and problems. What had been achieved was more a state of searching for solutions in the face of controversies, intending to arrive at mutually beneficial results.<sup>64</sup>

Ortega called for recognition of laypeople's difficulties in social and economic life: the prejudice, pressure, and rejection experienced by Catholics at schools, universities, and workplaces. Emphasizing concrete cooperation, Ortega asserted that most of the individual cases of discrimination had been resolved through personal encounters, which enabled Catholics—both clergy and laity—to further experience inclusion and acceptance in their concrete environments. This, according to Ortega, was the best method for increasing cooperation and dialogue between the Church and State. Most importantly, this was the direction in which Cuban Catholics wished to move when motivated by their faith: towards a visible commitment to social participation.<sup>65</sup>

The bishops publicly called for more opportunities for laypeople to demonstrate their commitment to the construction of *patria*. They urged laypeople to fulfill in society their role as "citizens with plenty of rights," while also emphasizing that the laity remain "conscious of their duties."<sup>66</sup> Followers of Jesus Christ, argued Ortega, knew personally the meaning of sacrifice and abnegation—the virtues of true revolutionaries—and could enrich Cuban society

62 COCC CP Prensa Latina / Jaime Ortega Alamino 26.12.1981.

63 Estado en Cuba, que se hicieron tirantes después del primer año del triunfo de la Revolución. COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estú 9.5.1981.

64 COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estú 9.5.1981.

65 COCC CP Prensa Latina / Jaime Ortega Alamino 26.12.1981.

66 COCC CP Prensa Latina / Jaime Ortega Alamino 26.12.1981.

with their spirit of service. It was crucial for the government and Cuban non-Catholics to overcome their prejudice to allow more space for believers to concretely employ their roles as dedicated workers, professionals, and citizens committed to their nation. This commitment of Catholics to Cuba, claimed Ortega, provided a resolution to the politics of religion in the revolution.<sup>67</sup>

Through such statements, the episcopate was imposing on the government, and public perception, a policy of openness from the Church to the State. In a similar way as the revolution constructed realities through the creation of narratives, the episcopate's effort at crafting a vision of rapprochement and growth in communion ultimately sought to provide for and bolster such encounters. Interestingly, the pattern of subsidiary representation resembled some of the revolutionary mechanisms in the interaction between the State and the individual and the construction of unity through unifying structures and narrative frameworks. In the Church, laypeople themselves were not discussing their life in public; their voices were echoed by the leadership. While it served to avoid direct references to individual lay Catholics living within the revolutionary reality, it also allowed the episcopate to influence public discourse from a position of authority. On the other hand, the policy directed the inter-ecclesial discourse and the manners in which it was pronounced to the world, imposing normativity on Church–State relations from the perspectives of the Church. In this manner, the uniformity of the hierarchy's voices contributed to the construction of ecclesial reality, both within the Church and the Cuban revolutionary reality.

The new normativity of Church–State relations both stemmed from and reinforced the small signs of accord in the daily life of clergy and laity. In 1982, a priest from the rural parish of Cabanas, in the Diocese of Pinar del Río, wrote<sup>68</sup> to his superiors in an unprecedentedly hopeful tone: “Everything's well here. We are preparing for the Lenten season and the patronal festival of Saint John. *Poder Popular*<sup>69</sup> authorized the renovations of the church in Bahía Honda. I expect it to go well.”<sup>70</sup> His words, curt yet hopeful, drew a remarkable contrast to the letters arriving from the same region to the bishop in the late 1960s. Instead of reports of the faithful abandoning the Church and Christian morals, losing their sense of identity as Catholics, small signs of hope were being portrayed through the prospects of future activities: preparation of liturgical celebrations together with community and collaboration with local revolutionary authorities were sources of quotidian contentment.

In the home diocese of the cleric, Pinar del Río, statistics showed a continuous decline in institutional participation: in 1982, the entire diocese celebrated 2110 baptisms of infants and 148 non-infants, together with only 21 matrimonies.<sup>71</sup> Despite the weak popularity of religious

67 COCC CP Prensa Latina / Jaime Ortega Alamino 26.12.1981.

68 For the original letter, see Appendix 3, picture 6.

69 The Constitution of 1976 had been established *Poder Popular* as a new system of political organization: a mechanism for the popular election of municipal, provincial, and national assemblies that enabled the mass participation of the people in decision-making. On a municipal level, which the priest referred to, the assemblies assumed both the responsibility and power over local infrastructure, education, health services, transportation, and leisure facilities. Pérez 2015a, 279.

70 Aquí todo anda bien. Estamos preparando la cuaresma y la fiesta patronal de S. José. El Poder Popular dio la autorización para la renovación de la iglesia de Bahía Honda. Espero que salga bien. ACOPR EST Roque Andet to Mons. Cayetano Martínez 21.2.1982.

71 ACOPR EST Obispado de Pinar del Río: Relación de Bautismos y de matrimonios habidos en la Diócesis en el año de 1981, 14.2.1982.



rites, the cleric knew how to appreciate the tiny traces of improvement occurring around the island: permission granted by the government to acquire vehicles for clergy and religious orders, permissions to initiate renovations of churches—construction of new churches was not authorized, which affected pastoral work particularly in newly established residential areas—and official approval and support voiced by State authorities for the social work conducted by religious orders. They were, as confirmed by Ortega, important and emblematic steps, of more significance than material relief.<sup>72</sup> In the discrepancy between official statistics and grassroots life, the cleric in Cabanas rooted his mission in daily interactions with people, both Catholics and non-believers, and searched for purpose in the everyday.

## 2. Voices from the Ground

In the course of 1984, REC proceeded to map the realities of Cuban life. After Azcaráte's initiative in 1979 and the postponed preparations, reflection had finally been inaugurated in 1981 as the preparatory committee resumed its work. In 1983, the reflection had moved to the local level, as "each congregation, community in the countryside and in the city, group and committee" proceeded to discuss the realities of the Church on the island. Diocesan assemblies further reinforced the local aspects in their meetings in the summer of 1985.<sup>73</sup> The process resulted in a nation-wide reflection on the resources of ecclesial life, pastoral work, and religious experience in Cuba. Remarkably, the periodical emphasis of the reflection was on present time: REC became a process for mapping Catholic experiences of life on the island as they were lived in *Cuba de hoy*, the Cuba of the moment. REC was a call for dynamic reflection and concrete changes, corresponding to the vision of young clergy: analyzing the prevailing ecclesial, social, and political frameworks and becoming integrated with them.<sup>74</sup>

In order to assess the prevailing conditions and realities, a method of reflection assumed by the Church was the *ver–juzgar–actuar* (see–judge–act) method.<sup>75</sup> With respect to REC, the method arrived from CELAM. It had been assumed and applied to the region's collective theological reflection on Vatican II in the Medellín conference, spreading from there to the continent as a method for analyzing the current reality and focusing on concrete action. It was also employed by liberation theologians, who placed a predominant focus on the lived reality of the people.<sup>76</sup> In theological terms, the method was known as the "pastoral circle," or "hermeneutical circle," placing prevailing contextual factors as the starting point for reflection instead of

72 AHAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Acción profética problemas S/N Pág. 1; COCC CP Prensa Latina / Jaime Ortega Alamino 26.12.1981.

73 For instance, AHAH REC AD LA HABANA Asamblea diocesana de la Reflexión Eclesial Cubana (REC): Nota de prensa.

74 COCC ENEC Vida Cristiana: Algunos elementos para un discernimiento teológico que ayude a orientar la vida y la misión de la Iglesia en Cuba; COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Arturo Rivera Damas 7.11.1985; APMC REC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín 31.7.1985; AOH ENEC Ciclo 10: "El Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano"; Interview 23.

75 APMC REC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana.

76 *Ver–juzgar–actuar* was a method widely applied in CELAM's work in Medellín and Puebla. However, it was rejected in CELAM's VI conference in Santo Domingo in 1992 and replaced with a more traditional, European model of judging–seeing–acting, thus replacing experiences and the perceived reality with theological premises and doctrines as the starting point of theological reflection. Boff 1993, 8–9; Tombs 2002, 121; Krier Mich 2004, 254; Bennett 2007, 39, 42–43; Bingemer 2016, 19, 22.

ahistorical theological concepts and principles.<sup>77</sup> In Cuba, the method was employed as a thread running through the entire process of revision and renewal: throughout the working papers, drafts, and final resumes, the method remained in practice. It was where the reflection began and against which the internal discourse of the Cuban Church was mirrored throughout the process.

Globally, the method was deeply rooted in Catholic social doctrine: often phrased as seeing or judging the “signs of the times,” the idea was first expressed by Pope John XXIII in his encyclical *Mater et Magistra* in 1961. Yet the approach was truly owned and acclaimed by Latin American post-conciliar Catholicism, becoming the framework through which the Church both interpreted and applied conciliar theology to the Latin American reality.<sup>78</sup> Between the method and the Cuban process there was, however, a significant discrepancy: although the method had originated in Medellín, the Cuban Church claimed Puebla as its primary reference and mirror for reflection.

The method was not a novelty in Cuban ecclesial life: through JOC, it had already claimed prestige as a framework for theological discourse and social consciousness among the laity. Created in the 1930s by Belgian Father Cardijn, the founder of JOC, the method was originally intended for small groups of laity to come together weekly in order to observe and discuss their environment, analyze and judge the situation in light of the gospel, and take action accordingly.<sup>79</sup> Interestingly, already in the first years of the revolution young female lay leaders in Havana had also been trained in a reflection entitled the Revision of Life through the hermeneutical cycle.<sup>80</sup> In Cuba, the Revision of Life as defined by Cardijn had contributed significantly to the ideal of the social and political participation of the laity. In this manner, the employment of the method in the course of REC also carried forward the vision of socially active, politically conscious Catholic laypeople in Cuba. The ideal of active Catholic participation in the construction of Cuba, resembling the discourse of 1959, resurfaced as an undercurrent still potentially influential in a distinctively Catholic interpretation of the revolution.

By use of the experience-based method, REC turned the perspective of the Cuban Church around. In the process of reflection, the assessment began by acknowledging the existing and prevailing conditions: the lived experience and realities of the Church through its people.<sup>81</sup> At the heart of the *ver-juzgar-actuar* method was an awareness of the historical situation of the moment: the social, economic, political, and cultural contexts in which the believers lived and within which the Church expressed itself. Everyday experience, the life and struggles of ordinary people, and the concrete participation of the clergy in a life of complexities and suffering became the ground on which the Church built its identity in Cuba.

Seeing, judging, and acting became the course of work for REC. In Cuba, the context to be acknowledged was the revolution. Use of the method marked a conscious shift in the Cuban Church’s perspective; or more likely, it made visible a change that had gradually occurred in the daily realities of the Church on the island. It brought the lived experience, the historical and

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77 Krier Mich 2004, 254.

78 Hebblethwaite 2007, 210–211.

79 Krier Mich 2004, 74.

80 For instance, AHAH AC JN JF J.F.F.A.C.C. Juventud Universitaria Católica: Jornada de Estudios 1959; AHAH AC JF La Habana Boletín Trimestral: Cuestionario Octubre-Noviembre-Diciembre 1965.

81 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Carlos Amigo Vallejo 7.11.1985.

physical context, into the center of the Church's perceptive field.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, conscious commitment put the Church on the move: according to the method, it was not enough for the Church to observe and analyze—the method also called the Church to take concrete action in the very present, corporeal circumstances in which it operated.

Commitment to the *ver-juzgar-actuar* method also made visible a shift in regional focus: the Church in Cuba had begun to turn away from Eurocentric Catholicism, marked by the historical presence of Spanish Catholicism and Europe-originating sources of financial resources on the island, and towards Latin American theological visions of the Church. The theological implications of the shift came together in the reception and interpretation of Vatican II and the emergence of Latin American theology rooted in the lived reality of the region.

As the method suggested, REC was a grassroots process. Its point of departure was lived experience: the life of Catholic communities on the island and within the revolution. The reflection took place in local communities and residential zones, culminating with diocesan assemblies.<sup>83</sup> In the course of the process, voices of clergy and laity from each diocese were included as experiences and commentaries on daily realities, summoned and gathered together by local working groups.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the experiences of the laity were discussed with unprecedented candidness and rigor.<sup>85</sup>

Along with a renewed focus on Cuban Catholics in the everyday, an influential opening in the process was the shift from internal discourse to seeking dialogue with the surrounding society. This included recognizing the distances between the Church and Cubans in several sectors of the population: militant revolutionaries, officials of the government and administration, professionals and students in revolutionary trajectories, and those leaning ideologically towards the revolution. In order to enable a broader cohort of voices, laypeople from various sectors of life—students, workers, unemployed, retired—were invited to voice their experiences with, expectations for, and criticisms of the Church. Remarkably, organizing committees also made the decision to include not only active lay Cubans, but also Cubans alienated from ecclesial spheres. Voices from the periphery, by formerly affiliated Catholics estranged from

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82 For instance, AHAH REC AD LA HABANA Asamblea diocesana de la Reflexión Eclesial Cubana (REC): Nota de prensa.

83 APMC REC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín 31.7.1985; AHAH REC AD LA HABANA Asamblea diocesana de la Reflexión Eclesial Cubana (REC): Nota de prensa; AHAH REC AD LA HABANA Homilía inauguración asamblea diocesana.

84 These voices are integrated into the forthcoming chapters of this study as a cohesive, comprehensive collection of sources. AHAH REC OP is a collection of archival sources dating to the conclusion of REC. The collection of notes, often handwritten by a secretary in a meeting of local REC groups, was initially created as a diocesan-level commentary on the conclusions of REC and the consulting document produced in preparation for the stage of reflection. As such, the singular commentaries highlighted missing topics and themes in the official drafts, pointed out differences of interpretation, and added layers to the voices emerging in the reflection process. In this capability, these documents are henceforth analyzed as independent sources describing the thoughts and experiences of Catholics in their local contexts on the island. For this study, the importance of the documents is in the way they may be read and treated through their nature as complementary voices expressing nuances, differences, and additions to the draft, which was considered more authoritative and normative by nature.

85 The candid nature of the discussions was noted in Pinar del Río in particular: the participants of the reflection wished to express their satisfaction in the “spirit of liberty” with which they were able to voice their thoughts “without restrictions nor fear.” However, in the same documents, the influence on and control over the reflection, apparently exercised by the ecclesial leadership, was criticized as the hierarchy of the Church assumed a role of direct exchange with the lay participants of the discussion. AHAH REC AD PINAR DEL RIO Asamblea diocesana de la R.E.C. Juicio global.

the Church or consciously maintaining a distance from the institution, were included in the reflection.<sup>86</sup>

Through them, another significant outreach effort was to engage working-age adults in the discourse: to have them pronounce their vision of the Church in Cuban society, and thus also to empower them to become active agents in the process itself. One of these stories took place in central Cuba. A laywoman, in her mid-thirties at the time of REC, was invited to participate in the process as a layperson who had left the Church in the early 1970s in order to secure a promising professional career.<sup>87</sup> From her perspective, she provided insight into the Church as seen from the periphery. Through voices such as hers, the intersections of religion and revolution were brought into the spotlight: the accounts of daily life of practicing Catholics were both complemented and challenged by accounts of revolutionary loyalties, militant communism, and failures of the Church to appear as a credible institution committed to the fatherland.

In Pinar del Río, participants in REC described it a process “enabling us to recognize and accept with realism and sincerity, sometimes with pain and hope, the mistakes, limitation, achievements, and accomplishments” of the Church living the revolution.<sup>88</sup> In Holguín, the multilayered accounts of reality and contrasting narratives not only between the Church and society but also within the Church were recognized as a challenging, at times painful, process.<sup>89</sup> These local expressions also show that the reflection process allowed autonomy to diocesan interpretations and practices: while the diocesan assemblies acknowledged the limitedness of reflection as a top-down process, it bestowed creative freedom upon discoveries in local dialogue.<sup>90</sup>

In 1985, REC culminated with diocesan assemblies summarizing the process by providing commentary on the draft of the concluding document. The assemblies resulted in frank discussions about the alienation of the Church from both socio-political structures and the daily realities of Cubans outside ecclesial spheres.<sup>91</sup> In the assemblies, from the multitude of voices layers of experiences and interpretations of Catholic life in the revolution came to the surface. The reflection contributed remarkably to the inclusion of individual experiences in the grand narratives constructed by both the Church and the State: individual stories woven into the institutional, and the institutional becoming aligned with voices from the grassroots level. For many in the laity, this marked recognition of both their experiences and voices of the clergy and episcopal hierarchy. It also marked a rare collective opportunity to provide cohesive, comprehensive criticism of the revolution from Catholic perspectives.

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86 Interview 23.

87 Interview 19.

88 Nos permitió reconocer y aceptar con realismo y sinceridad, a veces con dolor y esperanza errores, limitaciones, logros y realizaciones. AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO Frutos actuales de la Reflexión (Pn. R.).

89 AOH REC Encuesta 1–3 Diócesis de Holguín; APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín. For a report on the conditions for pastoral work in Holguín, see Appendix 3, picture 5.

90 AOH REC Crónico de un encuentro; APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín.

91 AHAH REC Asambleas Diocesanas: Cursillo de Dinámica; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA 8 Participación en la vida del pueblo.

Laypeople criticized State authorities for treating Catholic laity in the frameworks of the revolution as politicized objects instead of subjects engaged in civic participation. The predominant experience of the laity was a rejection of civic participation through their Catholic identity: even though they might be good workers and citizens, they were positioned in a role of otherness, with Catholicism overshadowing their commitment to society. According to a group of laypeople in Camagüey, the best they could achieve in the daily life of their neighborhoods, working places, and schools was not being attacked for their religious identities and practices. At the same time, they themselves considered their role as contributing to the revolutionary process through human resources, families, labor, and silent acceptance of the prevailing socio-political circumstances. Some considered their decision to remain on the island an act of patriotism that was not acknowledged or appreciated by State authorities.<sup>92</sup>

Laypeople themselves described the experience as being “accepted as foreigners cooperating with the revolution,” with feelings of inferiority and blame.<sup>93</sup> Both documental and oral sources discuss the effect of normative citizenry through sanctions in daily life: the alienness of Catholics in revolutionary society was transformed into repeating patterns of limited political participation, limited study and career options, and general unpopularity resulting in a lack of material favors and privileges in the day-to-day course of life.<sup>94</sup>

The discourse on professional and, consequently, economic discrimination related to a deeper current of criticism, dissent, and dissatisfaction with Cuba’s declining economic and material resources. As other scholarly work has established, economic hardship in the early 1980s resulted in efforts by individual Cubans to compensate for and contest the State’s failures via the pursuit of individual gain, excessive and illegal secondary sources of income, and the black market. Simultaneously, discrepancies emerged in the transactions of enterprises and businesses and voluntary work disappeared.<sup>95</sup> Yet in the public sphere of the revolution, forbidden topics of discussion on the Cuban economy included, for instance, criticism of investment policies and resource allocation.<sup>96</sup> In this regard, the Church also provided a significant space for candid discussions about economic realities and politics on the island.

The continuous tension regarding the role of the laity at the intersection of Church and State underscored the changing ideal of the laity in the revolutionary reality. Inscribed in the laypeople’s critique of the revolutionary policies of exclusion was the fact that they had already been integrated into the revolutionary society. At the same time, the will Catholics expressed to engage in social discourse acquired more space than was provided for Catholic participation in the public discourse of the revolution. With regard to this, from the perspective of the Church,

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92 AHAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Realidad social adición 2 Pág.1.

93 AHAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Atención pastoral de las comunidades – Actuar 1. – Pág. 5; AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO Frutos actuales de la Reflexión (Pn. R.).

94 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO No. 4 Realidad social; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Familia 15 Presiones externas–intolerancia; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA No creyentes NC – 3 Exclusión de los órganos partidistas; SSCSA CQ Curso de Catequesis para Catequistas; Interview 14; Interview 29.

95 Smith & Padula 1996, 152; Pérez-Stable 2012, 125.

96 Pérez-Stable 2012, 106.

social marginalization also carried with it a risk of potentially becoming alienated from Catholicism.<sup>97</sup> The complexity of lay life in the revolution influenced the nature of ecclesial commitment as well:

The environment in which they [the laity] live, study, and work generally does not appreciate them as Christians because of the presence of atheist ideology and praxis. This, among other mechanisms and realities, puts pressure on them and determines their lives, creating a myriad of worries regarding career, positions of work, education of their children, material benefits, etc., with the risk of losing their faith.<sup>98</sup>

A great number of clergy and laity considered public adherence to atheism a viable means of social progress in an individual's life: to either remain passive with respect to ecclesial affiliations or profile oneself as an atheist would bring social and economic benefits denied from publicly practicing Catholics. The Church was preoccupied with the fact that "opportunistic atheism"<sup>99</sup> had resulted in declining participation in ecclesial life and created an illusion of the rejection of Christianity in Cuba, further reinforcing the marginalization of religion.

The Church maintained that because of the requirements for public performance in support of the revolution, a significant portion of Cubans merely remained at distance from the Church so as not to complicate daily life by association with institutional religion.<sup>100</sup> "In many workers one can note the fear of discrimination for going to the church. There are those working for the State that think it inhibits them from participation in the Church," noted the participants in Santiago de Cuba. Their commentaries also referred to concrete cases in which Catholics had been rejected for a job or had experienced difficulties in employment on the basis of their religion.<sup>101</sup> In Holguín, the isolation of silent believers was acknowledged as a distinct feature of local religiosity, particularly problematic from the perspective of communitarian ecclesiology.<sup>102</sup> In Santiago de Cuba, the absence of workers affected the construction of Catholic communities: working-age adults were considered a particularly vulnerable group in their affiliation with the Church.<sup>103</sup>

In Pinar del Río, both documental and oral sources note that a large number of Cubans were not publicly practicing but nevertheless hosting the Catholic faith intimately while also participating in the revolution.<sup>104</sup> According to local communities, these Catholics refrained from active presence, yet engaged in such religious practices as the use of blessed water, praying the rosary—although not everyone knew how to anymore, as pointed out by the clergy—

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97 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laico 7 Presiones externas; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Laicos LC-23.

98 El ambiente en que vive, estudia o trabaja, no le estima generalmente como cristiano por existir una ideología y praxis atea. Este entre otros mecanismos y realidades, le presiona y condiciona, creándole una serie de preocupaciones en cuanto a la carrera, el puesto de trabajo, la educación de los hijos, las ventajas materiales, etc. con el riesgo de perder él mismo la fe. AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Laicado 147 Presiones, discrimínenes...

99 Ateísmo oportunista. AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA No. 4 Realidad social.

100 For instance, Interview 4; Interview 6; Interview 9; Interview 14; Interview 26.

101 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Obreros 2 Presiones externas.

102 APMC REC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Testimonio de Amor.

103 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Familia 15 Presiones externas—intolerancia.

104 AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO Evangelización de creyentes no practicantes; AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO L. Comprometido 15–3 Realidad social; Interview 13; Interview 14.

devotion to patron saints and occasional participation in their festivities, and popular expressions of religiosity.<sup>105</sup> They also received visits from clergy, religious orders, and lay members of communities for the birth of babies and in times of sickness and death, even though the popularity of Catholic sacraments had declined and the State had assumed authority over life-span rites. A specific form of visiting, although rare, was the entrance of an effigy of *La Virgen de La Caridad del Cobre* or other saints into the homes of *pinareños*—which some of the clergy were reluctant to approve of because they did not support popular interpretations of devotion to saints.<sup>106</sup> A similar interest in prayer was claimed by the diocesan committee of Holguín: according to them, both practicing Catholics and non-believers had begun to recognize a renewed necessity for deepening spirituality and personal encounter with God, despite it not being socially acceptable.<sup>107</sup>

In the discourse on non-believers, a shared vision had to do with an understanding of the prevailing condition that caused a large number of *matanzeros* to conceal their identities as Catholics as well as their silent support for the Church:

There are many, countless, anonymous Christians in Cuba: those who host sincere beliefs but are afraid of expressing them. Many of them have been believers all their lives, others have reached faith through specific circumstances of individual trajectories in the revolutionary period. The testimony provided by Catholics in their vicinity has contributed to the sustainment of faith.<sup>108</sup>

With a growing sense of pride, the Church suggested that not only had religiosity prevailed in the revolution; it had also increased through personal conversions and interpersonal relations. Coinciding with this assessment was the structured approach for individual encounters among Cubans, entitled *trabajo individual con creyentes*, introduced to militant State officials by the Communist Party as an approach to advancing the revolutionary ideology amongst Catholics.<sup>109</sup> Yet the often repeated accounts from Matanzas and Pinar del Río suggest that the human dimension of the revolution, interpersonal relations and encounters at the grassroots level, not only served to create attachment to the revolutionary process, but also generated disaffiliation and flux towards competing forms of communitarian belonging and belief systems.

For the Church, the overarching achievement of the reflection process was the open naming of fear as an all-consuming emotional landscape of Cuban Catholics. According to both clergy and laity, the predominant emotion in public identification with the Church for both lay Catholics and ordinary Cubans formerly engaged in religious practices was fear, which, as was discussed in Santiago de Cuba, most often equaled fear of expressing religiosity publicly.<sup>110</sup> One interviewee concluded that while freedom of religion was never officially denied by the government, “people were manipulated to become scared.”<sup>111</sup> In addition, numerous written

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105 AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO Evangelización de creyentes no practicantes – Medios más utilizados; AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO Razones por las cuales no se utilizan más – Los medios poco utilizados.

106 AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO Evangelización de creyentes no practicantes – Medios más utilizados.

107 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: La oración.

108 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS No-Creyentes V–196, p. 61 Diálogo y valores de no creyentes; AHAH REC AD MATANZAS REC Mensaje de la Asamblea Diocesana de Matanzas.

109 AHAH Material del Estudio.

110 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laico 7 Presiones externas; AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO Evangelización de creyentes no practicantes.

111 Interview 4.

reports candidly discussed fear as a personal experience of the majority of lay Catholics, directing them to refrain from supporting the Church.<sup>112</sup>

Linked with the collective emphasis on fear, another oft repeated narrative in the experiences of laypeople was worry, anxiety, and uncertainty about their prospects for professional and social development and individual life trajectories as a result of the restrictive policies and anti-religious atmosphere.<sup>113</sup> Despite the lack of written evidence, contemporaries of the 1970s and 1980s treat professional discrimination as a shared experience of lay Catholics. Recurring stories and episodes all around the island discuss members of local Catholic communities being publicly criticized at work, losing their jobs, and being denied the opportunity to practice their profession. In equal measures, the interviewees of this study discuss the histories of lay Catholics assigned to other jobs, impeded from freely choosing their academic careers and directed into fields of study that would orientate young Catholics towards professions of a mechanical and technical nature, such as engineering.<sup>114</sup>

Related to the central role of academic education as a media for revolutionary enculturation, careers engaging with ideological influence, such as teaching, journalism, and administrative duties in governance, were not open for Catholics to pursue. Particularly crucial was the education of minors, a field in which Catholics were not able to work; in the education of adults, lay Catholics were allowed to teach with more flexibility, although sometimes Catholics themselves refused to work in openly Marxist frameworks and positions.<sup>115</sup> As has been noted by Pérez, in addition to the philosophical foundations of the revolution, the scientific focus and prevalence of careers in medicine and technology reflected the reshaping of higher education according to national priorities.<sup>116</sup> To this end, Catholics in the field of science also included highly skilled professionals whom the State needed to fill the void left by the large numbers of Cuban professionals in exile.

In the course of reflection, voices of criticism directed towards the Church also surfaced. In Holguín, a particularly candid exchange was rooted in discussions of confidence, trust, and mechanisms of State control within Catholic communities. As the participants drew attention to the attitudes of clergy and laity towards their peers outside the Church, they issued a warning against simple binaries and the prejudice existing between Catholics and revolutionaries. In recent years, the group suggested, the Church had too easily assumed a view of the supporters of the revolution as non-believers and opponents of religion; in reality, the critics noted, “one does not know which is the way of [a peer’s] worldview; in many cases one presumes them to be atheists.” In local communities, suspicion and mistrust of peers caused tension and conflicts among clergy and laity: the questioning of one’s motives for religious participation, suspicion of fellow Catholics working for the government as informants infiltrating the community, and

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112 AHAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Acción Profética Laicado – Problema del cubano hoy – Pág. 1; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laico 16 (J) Presiones externas; AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO Obstáculos a la REC.

113 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Familia 15 Presiones externas–intolerancia.

114 Interview 4; Interview 30.

115 Interview 4; Interview 18; Interview 30. In scholarly work, the discrimination of Catholics in professional life has been discussed by, for example, Pedraza 2007.

116 Pérez 2015a, 285.



“hypocrisy emerging from relations affected by mistrust” were counted as being among the social experiences continuously faced by Catholics.<sup>117</sup>

Suspicion and doubt prevented exchange and encounters both amongst Catholics and revolutionaries open to religion. The Holy Spirit was called to assist in coping with such fears and anxieties with serenity. “The suspicion of ‘informants’ within communities also undermines communion - - regrettably giving rise to mistrust and, consequently, closing doors.”<sup>118</sup> The exchange also revealed new information on the experience of State control and monitored revolutionary performance. Similar to the concerns expressed by seminarians in the early 1970s, laypeople highlighted enforced control and the surveillance of Catholics by the Cuban government as an experience that continued to mark and reinforce their sense of otherness and contributed to the construction of binaries within Cuban society.

Local communities experienced varying degrees of pressure, depending also on the stance of local revolutionary authorities and possible personal connections, which helped ease tension. Both hostility and tolerance were experienced locally around the island.<sup>119</sup> Behind the local variants, a common trace in lay voices was the acknowledgment of official State policies—although only rarely pronounced—signaling approval of discrimination against Catholics at work, from their professional advancement to assuming positions of responsibility and power, limiting their duties to mid-sector or manual labor. Laypeople systematically reflected on the daily impression that administrative and political leaders still hosted reservations about Catholics and doubted the authenticity of their commitment to work.<sup>120</sup> More generally, this was interpreted as representative of the mistrust of the revolution’s leadership of Catholics’ existence and participation in Cuban society: it underscored the persistent claim that Catholicism equaled disaffection with the revolution and the difficulties of the revolutionary regime to accept variations in its own settled narratives.

The binaries of private and public citizenry in the revolution were criticized strongly by laypeople in particular. At the junction of these binaries was, again, the position of the Catholic family in daily performance of the revolution. In Santiago de Cuba, laypeople implied that families were subjected to tension both from within and outside the home: at home, religiosity caused tension among family members, while in the public space religiosity was reduced to a domestic matter.<sup>121</sup> Also acknowledged were the changes in cross-generational exchange: whereas grandparents of the 1960s had worried about the transmittance of religious convictions to their offspring and assumed agency in securing it, parents of the early 1980s expressed a concern about the future of their children if they were affiliated with the Church.<sup>122</sup>

For children, schools were identified as a challenging environment. Numerous sources, both documental and oral, discuss the pressure Catholic children experienced when facing the

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117 APMC REC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Testimonio de Amor.

118 APMC REC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Testimonio de Amor.

119 AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO Evangelización de creyentes no practicantes.

120 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Profesionales 2 Presiones externas; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Obreros 2 Presiones externas; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Laicos LC–17 Dificultades de laicos en la vida social.

121 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Familia 8 Presiones externas–intolerancia.

122 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Catequesis 7 Presiones externas, intolerancia.

requirement to assimilate with the revolutionary paradigm. Parents criticized the double vision this portrayed for children of their homeland: they were pressured to integrate into the same society that saw them through a perspective of otherness and ostracized them from fully accepted citizenry.<sup>123</sup> Regarding elementary education, the Cuban episcopate attempted to balance between either applauding or criticizing state-provided, free elementary education and its emphasis on official, enforced Marxist ideology. Education provided by the revolution received a positive note for its accessibility to all, despite “us as believers having our reservations about the ideological content of it.”<sup>124</sup>

At the same time, the Church was aware of the challenge in juxtaposing State education with a Catholic upbringing. At schools, teachers asked children about their families’ religious affiliation and chastised them for their Catholic identity. In the schoolyard, peers were allowed to mockingly call children of religious families “Catholics” and physically assault them.<sup>125</sup> According to parents, children were constantly pressured not to attend Church groups by their peers. In Marxist education, they were subjected to worldviews based on material atheism as its pedagogical framework. In educational discourse, religion was presented as anti-scientific and discussed using derogatory language.<sup>126</sup> Also criticized was the lack of space and discourse on existential reflection for children at school, which was seen as a catalyst for the decay of values and moral consciousness in public and private life, leading also to further alienation from the public recognition of religion.<sup>127</sup>

Parents also reported experiences of the State criticizing what teaching children received at home, creating a further juxtaposition between official State education, with its enforced atheism, and the religious education received at home, placing children and teenagers in a difficult situation between public and private participation, integration, and expression.<sup>128</sup> With parents, this created uncertainty and fear both for public manifestations of religiosity and for transmitting those practices to their children. The Church noted with worry that parent’s difficulties in merging social participation and religious practices often led to a culture of dismissal of religious traditions.<sup>129</sup> In the revolutionary production of social norms, parents were encouraged to avoid non-state-directed social activities, committing both themselves and their children exclusively to the revolution.<sup>130</sup>

The episcopate and clergy thus defined the support of families in religious formation as a priority, emphasizing the need to counter the efforts of surrounding society to impose Marxist worldviews on children, youth, and adults alike through all media and social interactions.<sup>131</sup>

123 For instance, AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Familia 15 Presiones externas–intolerancia; Interview 12, Interview 14; Interview 21; Interview 26; Interview 30.

124 Como creyentes tenemos nuestras reservaciones sobre el contenido ideológico de la misma. COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estiu 9.5.1981.

125 Interview 12.

126 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Catequesis, V–I. p. 51 Presiones; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA No. 2 Realidad social; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Catequesis 7 Presiones externas, intolerancia; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA No. 4 Realidad social.

127 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Jóvenes 7 Realidad social.

128 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Jóvenes 11 Familia 15 Presiones exteriores.

129 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 7 Presiones externas.

130 Casavantes Bradford 2014, 75.

131 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Comunidades A–1ª, p.45 Educación de vs concepción materialista; AHAH REC OP MATANZAS La Familia A–1, p. 40 Actitud tendencias materialistas y extranjerizantes; AHAH REC OP

Laypeople demanded support from the Church for children facing pressure at school for their families' religious activities. Also instrumental was teaching children to express religion as their right, not as a punishable act<sup>132</sup>—to empower children in their Catholic identity. These demands corresponded to the experiences of lay children: in interviews, the children of the 1970s repeatedly referred to questions and questionnaires about their family's religious practices and ideological commitments, participation in Catholic activities, and the atmosphere towards religion at home. Some recalled physical abuse by teachers or peers, based on public knowledge of one's religious background and family traditions.<sup>133</sup>

In higher education and advanced studies, Catholic young adults continued to face systematic restrictions via limited options and peer pressure.<sup>134</sup> In schools and at work, they reported becoming continuously ridiculed and criticized by their peers for their religious convictions<sup>135</sup>—youth was considered a domain for the revolution, not religiosity. Yet the younger generation was also supported by Catholic elders in their potential to generate more inclusive peer encounters. The solidarity and friendship fostered by the youth was believed to enable the surpassing of the ideological fault lines faced by the preceding generations.<sup>136</sup> In Matanzas and Santiago de Cuba, Catholic youth themselves promoted further exchange and dialogue with their peers, remarkably also demanding solidarity and mutual respect for young communists from Catholic youth unwilling to overcome the binaries and prejudice.<sup>137</sup>

With similar tones, the clergy was also criticized by the laity for not doing everything possible to help their flock overcome the fear of public association with the Church and for not openly defending people publicly scorned for their affiliation. Clerics were asked to encourage the laity in seemingly quotidian acts that had yet acquired a critical symbolic value in the public performance of the revolution, such as attending church on Sundays. Ultimately, many in the laity demanded that the clergy openly express sympathy for and participate in the highly pressurized environment faced by the laity: to defend laypeople experiencing discrimination and to empower Catholic laity to defend their own rights to free worship and social participation.<sup>138</sup> They were also urged by the laity to portray a more exemplary Christian lifestyle and availability for their communities as pastors.<sup>139</sup> In Holguín, a particular emphasis was laid on *sacerdotes obreros*, worker priests sharing the daily life of residential zones and participating in the manual

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STA. CLARA Catequesis, # 635 Formación para sociedad; AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Familia, J–522 Familia evangelizadora sociedad; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Catequesis, presiones y tensiones.

132 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Catequesis 10–5 Constitución; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Familia 24/2–4 Acción profética.

133 Interview 12; Interview 17; Interview 19; Interview 26.

134 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Jóvenes 11 Familia 15 Presiones exteriores; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Jóvenes, falsa apertura, presión contra la fe.

135 AHAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Comunidades Cristianas-327. Pág. 7.

136 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Jóvenes 5 Presiones externas–intolerancia; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA No creyentes NC–10 Trabajo y estudio.

137 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Jóvenes A–3, p. 32 Relación otros jóvenes; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Jóvenes 5 Presiones externas–intolerancias; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Jóvenes Integración; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Jóvenes J–21 Solidaridad, respeto a la dignidad del hombre.

138 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 43 Magisterio (Obispos, sacerdotes); AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO Evangelización de creyentes no practicantes; AHAH REC OP PINAR DEL RIO Rasgos negativos del cubano.

139 APMC REC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: La oración.

labor still considered an integral part of revolutionary commitment. With inescapable echoes of liberation theology, some of which also erupted in Havana,<sup>140</sup> their work within the Church represented a significant step of accommodation with the revolutionary process and was met with resistance by both their fellow priests and the laity.<sup>141</sup>

A prevailing, controversial, and contested topic in ecclesial discourse of the early 1980s was the degree of social integration and identification with the revolution. The most progressive voices encouraged laypeople to increasingly seek power and influence in political and social life as Catholics, basing their political orientation on Catholic social doctrine.<sup>142</sup> From Santiago de Cuba, even open advocacy of liberation theology as a mean of integration was voiced.<sup>143</sup> At the same time, the reflection group in Matanzas claimed that some lay Catholics continued to marginalize themselves at workplaces and in schools, reinforcing disaffiliation from the revolution.<sup>144</sup> A similar alignment was encountered in Camagüey and Santiago de Cuba, with certain communities, local clergy included, continuing to reject the new social, political, and economic realities on the island and employing a more missionary approach to pastoral work.<sup>145</sup>

Remarkably, these voices also suggested that despite the more inclusive tones, some of the laypeople expressed feelings of isolation within Catholic communities for their open commitment to the revolutionary process, recounting words and actions of mistrust and a lack of confidence by other Catholics in those who had become more integrated with the revolution and yet still had maintained a Catholic identity and a sense of loyalty to the Church. They reported having experienced ostracism within groups of Catholics and expressed discontent for not having received explicit support from the Church, including their peers, clergy, and the episcopate.<sup>146</sup> From these differing visions on engagement in the revolution, confrontation and conflicts emerged within communities among clergy and laity alike.<sup>147</sup>

Some of the laity mentioned being openly criticized by their Catholic peers for expressing a strong commitment to the revolution and for not having cherished their Catholic identities as defined by the Church.<sup>148</sup> This discourse offers valuable, previously unacknowledged insight into the manners in which, within Catholic communities on the island, boundaries of acceptable integration, normative Catholic thought and expression, and, most importantly, visions of interaction at the junctions of Catholic social thought and revolutionary ideology were tested, contested, and discussed not only between the Church and State, but also among Catholics themselves. As the expectations by the laity for more explicit support from clergy suggest, and intertwined with the discourse of daily experiences within the revolution, REC as a process also

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140 For instance, AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Fe nuestra y praxis política.

141 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Sacerdotes; Interview 23; Interview 24; Also Gómez Treto discusses the vision of worker priests in Havana. See Gómez Treto 1988, 83.

142 AHAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Participación No-Creyentes 358 Modificación.

143 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos participación.

144 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Laicado, V-147 Ad. Actitud del xtno. ante el trabajo.

145 AHAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Comunidades Cristianas-327. Pág. 7; AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Comunidades, V-6 p. 42 Cerradas a nuevas realidades; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 40 Participación.

146 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 11 Magisterio.

147 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Testimonio de Amor.

148 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 17-2 (J) Participación – cercanía con el pueblo.

turned the lens of reflection inwards: at the heart of the discourse was not only an assessment of the social dimensions of ecclesial life, but also discernment of the internal dynamics of the Church. Instead of merely accusing the Cuban government of discriminatory policies, the reflection addressed the role of the Church in generating marginalization and alienation amongst its own ranks.

According to laypeople in Santiago de Cuba, the Catholic community on the island was in need of sustaining and reinforcing its internal solidarity by accepting Cubans of various backgrounds and socio-political stances into the community,<sup>149</sup> thus constructing a community based on equality and mutual respect despite varying levels of commitment to the prevailing political system and social realities.<sup>150</sup> Remarkably, inscribed in the voices of the laity was not a demand for uniformity and cohesion in political thought: on the contrary, they emphasized Catholics' free, individually defined orientations to socio-political integration. In comparison to the clergy's more rigid stances on ecclesial uniformity, these lay voices also contested the visions of normativity within the Church, suggesting a more multifaceted Catholic discourse and encounters with the revolution. At the same time, the discourse provides a striking display of the internal tensions within the Church, through which Catholics negotiated not only their identities as Cubans and citizens of the revolution but also believers.

The discussion on points of encounter with non-Catholics—non-believers, as they were often called with reference to atheism as a prevailing State ideology—shows that despite limited opportunities for public participation, the Church maintained an understanding of missionary spirit through social commitment. Engagement in society was considered a means for evangelization: a church visibly present in the Cuban reality was a church capable of capturing the attention of those not present in the ecclesial reality.<sup>151</sup> In order to navigate the revolutionary reality as publicly identifying Catholics, laypeople in Santiago de Cuba demanded that the bishops offer clear and precise guidance regarding concrete issues of daily life.<sup>152</sup> In Holguín, the bishops were further criticized for their lack of public appearances and for maintaining a conformist public image. In their attempt to avoid confrontation with the government and society, the bishops were at risk of becoming irrelevant and invisible, complacent in a level of hierarchical comfort no longer in alignment with the new ideals of pastoral presence stemming from post-Vatican II Catholicism.<sup>153</sup>

As a result of the contesting voices, multiple narratives on social reality, and intra-ecclesial redefinition of Catholic identity, the Church began to promote more open acknowledgment of social commitment and participation. This included public recognition of the revolution's positive achievements: bishops encouraged both clergy and the laity to assume and positively emphasize the values provided by the revolution that coincided with Christian teaching.<sup>154</sup> In

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149 AHAAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA C. Cristiana 25 Libertad inter-comunitaria.

150 AHAAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 37 vida comunitaria; AHAAH REC OP LA HABANA Laicos LC-3 Acción política.

151 AHAAH REC OP STA. CLARA Laicado, 297 Evangelización laicos.

152 AHAAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Obispos 4 Obispos.

153 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: Obispos.

154 AHAAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Acción Profética Problemas 19 S/N adición; AHAAH REC OP STA. CLARA Jóvenes A-822 Valorización sociedad; AHAAH REC OP LA HABANA No creyentes NC-23, 23.6 Aceptación y respeto; AHAAH REC OP LA HABANA Fe, política: opción Marxista y opción cristiana.

contrast, some voices, in Santa Clara for instance, were demanding more non-conformist attitudes from the Church.<sup>155</sup> Despite openly expressing sympathy for the revolution, many in the clergy treaded carefully in their political expressions. A priest from eastern Cuba remarked, for example, that while he was strongly associated with the revolutionary workers of his local community, he never accepted their constant invitation to participate in the 1<sup>st</sup> of May march to which they were willing to include a cleric in their ranks.<sup>156</sup>

An overarching sentiment of national reflection was to encourage laity to further participation in social and even political discourse in any way possible. Although it was noted that the path to political participation in the Cuban Communist Party, the military, or positions of trust was closed to practicing Catholics, they were nonetheless encouraged to seek more openings for social participation and commitment to political life on the island as well. Despite militant atheism being considered the prevailing framework for social life and a precondition for political participation that impeded Catholics from further rapprochement, Catholics were encouraged to test and contest the boundaries of social roles and performance.<sup>157</sup> Visible commitment to society was considered vital for establishing communion and dialogue with non-Catholics and militant communists.<sup>158</sup>

Participants in the discussion used religion to make sense of the revolution and the revolution to revisit their religious interpretations of the reality they lived in. They situated religion in the everyday, in the ordinary, daily existence of individuals and communities on the island, and within the revolutionary framework. Throughout the course of REC, voices from the grass-roots level, from Catholic communities around the island, and from individual Catholics reflecting on their experiences of daily life and lived realities showed that the change had already taken place. Large groups of Catholics already led their lives in intertwining spheres of the revolution and religiosity. This highlighted the importance of a more credible institutional commitment by the Church to Cuban society. As such, the Catholic Church provided space for critical consciousness in the revolution. The discourse of the early 1980s showed how boundaries of participation, identification, and inclusion were both defined and tested within Catholic communities.

Arising from the dire economic and material realities, shared struggle was again identified as a point of encounter between Catholics and non-Catholic Cubans. A shared, reinforced vision was that Catholics were obligated by the nature of their faith to participate authentically in the socio-economic realities on the island, recognizing and sharing both its triumphs and failures with non-believers.<sup>159</sup> Clergy stressed that the prevailing conditions of *patria* affected the life of the laity in particular: both ecclesial and social structures posed new challenges, implying that the role of laypeople was shifting towards a conscious commitment to agency in the “here and now.”<sup>160</sup>

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155 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Laicado 299 (a) Evangelización vs proselitismo.

156 Interview 24.

157 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA No. 2 Realidad social; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Laicos LC-3 Acción política; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Comunión Com.–28.

158 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA No Creyentes A–1 y ss. Síntesis para una pastoral...; AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA No Creyentes J–359 Comunión; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Mensaje 14 Evangelización.

159 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA No Creyentes, J–360 Asunción realidad ntro. pueblo.

160 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Laicado, 298 Nuevos desafíos; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Jóvenes J–16 (Juzgar).

As a further step in theologically discerning the new socio-economic realities, voices from Santa Clara referenced “the pains of Cubans as prophetic action from God, raising the Church to a promoter of communion and reconciliation,”<sup>161</sup> and issued a call for the Church to deepen its involvement in both the material and ideological struggles of Cubans. As was discussed in Santa Clara and Santiago Cuba, a way forward could only be found by recognizing the Church’s inevitable entanglement in the new Cuban reality. The old patterns of thought stemming from self-marginalization and outsider critique of the revolution no longer served their purpose for the survival of the institutional church; it was time for the Church to recognize its purpose in service to Cubans and to adjust its perception of reality accordingly. In order to be a truly authentic church of the people, the Cuban Church could not marginalize itself in the revolution: by isolating itself, the Church could neither “participate in the life of Cubans nor offer itself as a living symbol of joy from the shadows.”<sup>162</sup>

A recurring theme in the reflection was recognizing the lack of a social dimension to faith. In order to provide a perspective on Catholic participation in society, a positive, constructive approach to labor and social participation within the admitted frames of the revolution was emphasized as a way of orienting oneself to the construction of *patria* as citizens fulfilling their duties. At a time when poor labor discipline, mismanagement, an inefficient work culture, and inadequate quality control were the norm, as argued by Pérez-Stable,<sup>163</sup> lay Catholics emphasized their productivity and commitment to labor. By doing so, Catholics in fact joined the revolutionary leadership’s demand for bolstered morality<sup>164</sup> and commitment to the revolution in a society where the changing patterns of economy had become visible in individual Cubans’ lives through increasing levels of corruption and exploitation of privilege in accessing material, reflecting the pursuit of personal and private gains as a priority of citizens. From a revolutionary perspective, the changing priorities demoralized workers and their social commitment. Coinciding with economic change was also a change in family values, such as a declining marriage rate and increasing divorce rate. The revolutionary leadership responded to all these challenges by re-emphasizing its call for *conciencia*, revolutionary morality and commitment.<sup>165</sup> By providing a similar assessment on the state of morality, Catholics joined the call for reinforced participation in the construction of the inherently revolutionary society.

Ultimately, these voices represented a sense of adaptation and an evolution of faith.<sup>166</sup> New theology stemming from the national circumstances of Cuba, and informed by the ecclesial and socio-political realities on the island, was constructed to serve the people and correspond to their everyday experiences. In order to claim legitimacy, it was necessary for it to truly emerge from reality on the island and emphasize dialogue with and reconciliation among those committed to serve the nation. As was discussed by both the clergy and laity, *testimonio de la vida* was well established and rooted in the self-understanding of Catholics of all generations,

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161 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Comunión, # 253 Encarnación (pueblo).

162 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Comunión, # 253 Encarnación (pueblo); AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 40 Participación.

163 Pérez-Stable 2012, 125.

164 AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Laicos LC–7 Hedonismo; AHAH REC OP LA HABANA Jóvenes, falsa apertura, presión contra la fe.

165 Padula & Smith 1985, 84; Pérez–Stable 1985, 303; Pérez–Stable 2012, 123; Veltmeyer & Rushton 2012, 107; Pérez 2015a, 291.

166 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Jóvenes A–1 p. 32–33 Responsabilidades cívicas y sociales.

expanding from perseverance to presence and agency through active participation in social activities and interpersonal relations across ideological boundaries.<sup>167</sup> Yet as an approach to life as a Church, it was not sufficient. As missionary openness was becoming a new emphasis of the Cuban Church, testimony through presence only portrayed a partial engagement of the Church.

A renewed missionary spirit began to reach the grassroots level and become intertwined with the daily meaning-making of spirituality: “With the spirit of dialogue and reconciliation, the Church in Matanzas,” where courses, workshops, and discourses had already facilitated space for cross-ideological encounters, “wants to live and fulfill its mission,” declared one study group. According to them, the missionary spirit required “fidelity to the Gospel, Vatican II, and the signs of the times.”<sup>168</sup> This example portrayed how Vatican II and Medellín grew from institutional events to grassroots phenomena also in Cuba. Furthermore, the methodological context of “seeing the signs of the times” was received on the island and gradually transformed into a more inclusive reading of the revolution through theological and ecclesiological reflection.

Clergy suggested that Vatican II had given Cuban Catholics a new perspective on non-believers, emphasizing dialogue as a way forward in search of fraternity through shared humanity.<sup>169</sup> While they declared that many of the laity had already grown to appreciate the values of non-believers, particularly those they shared, they admitted that in others, prejudice prevailed. For them, the bitter experience included a sense of exclusion from social progress: neither the triumphs nor failures in Cuba’s socio-economic life had reached all believers; many considered themselves alienated from the development. This disenfranchisement enabled a sense of disconnection, preventing some of the laity from acknowledging or recognizing the revolution as their own prevailing reality.<sup>170</sup>

Among the experiences causing bitterness was the exclusion of Catholics from economic opportunities scarce in Cuba in the early 1980s. As an inescapable reality for all, the declining economy directed the Cuban Church to address a lack of wealth and poverty as dimensions of the social experiences of all Cubans. Puebla 1979 had reaffirmed the Preferential Option for the Poor as the primary vision in Latin American Catholicism, while simultaneously rejecting liberation theology. Whereas a decade earlier poverty had been omitted from Cuban theological discourse, at the turn of the 1980s it was recognized and transformed into a Cuban context. The interpretation was expressed by Archbishop Meurice, who referred to the resonance of Vatican II in Latin America through indigenous theological reflection, from which the focus on the Church being committed to the poor arose from contextual ground.<sup>171</sup>

In the early 1980s, the Cuban Church began to view poverty to a large extent within the frameworks of Latin American theology of the late 1960s.<sup>172</sup> In a socialist society, the Church responded to poverty among Cubans without sufficient income or who were unable to work.

167 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Jóvenes V–801 Participación sociedad.

168 Con este espíritu de diálogo y reconciliación, quiere la Iglesia en Matanzas vivir y cumplir su misión - fidelidad al Evangelio, a Vaticano II y a los signos de los tiempos. AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Mensaje A.D. # 12 Iglesia encarnada.

169 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS No-Creyentes V–196, p. 61 Diálogo y valores de no creyentes.

170 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS No-Creyentes V–196, p. 61 Diálogo y valores de no creyentes.

171 COCC CP Cuestionario de prensa 20.4.1981 / Pedro Meurice Estú 9.5.1981.

172 Gutiérrez 2007, 25–26; Bingemer 2016, 44.



Furthermore, poverty was present in “alcoholics, the disorientated, those tired of life, those who’d experienced failures in life, non-conformists to the revolution, those who didn’t know Christ, prisoners and their families, those marginalized from society, those practicing popular religions, those who’d lost their homes.”<sup>173</sup> Within the Cuban Church, poverty was also addressed as a spiritual orientation, which could be understood not as hardship but as a requirement for Catholics to deepen their spirituality.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, the Church began to portray the spirit of poverty through the negation of hegemony and privilege.<sup>175</sup> While this emphasis emerged from the distinctive Cuban experience, it resonated with liberation theological ideas about poverty as a spiritual dimension, forming a commitment for all Christians in solidarity with the poor.<sup>176</sup> As such, the discourse revealed another paradox within the Church: while it continued to identify points of encounter and shared identification with Cuban revolutionary society building on Marxism, it simultaneously defied liberation theology as a framework for the Cuban context by continuously presenting a critical, exclusively Marxist, and consequently European, reading of liberation theology.

The Preferential Option for the Poor, the commitment of the Church to identify with the poor, was discussed in Matanzas in particular. The group arrived at the conclusion that the Church should commit itself to a life serving the poor through whatever means of service possible in Cuba: it meant responding to the types of poverty encountered by the Church, such as a lack of faith, a lack of moral principles, those most in need of support and comfort, or those impoverished by fear.<sup>177</sup> Through this framework, the Church would work towards liberation. The discourse shows how within certain groups of the Cuban Church, the socio-economic dimension of liberation was excluded from ecclesial discourse and reduced to a spiritual approach. When liberation was employed as a shared point of departure for dialogue, it signified liberation from sin and from what stood between communion amongst Cubans themselves and Cubans with God. Most closely mirroring liberation theology was the remark that liberation also included liberation from whatever opposed the freedom and dignity of humans as well as the economic and cultural development of Cuban people.<sup>178</sup>

Yet the discourse on poverty also enabled the Church to discern its own potential within the revolutionary reality. Cuba’s declining economy and the apparent disillusionment of Cubans with the revolutionary process helped crystallize the mission of the Church: the Church was to communicate the idea of Christian hope in an understandable manner available for those not familiar with Catholic terminology and transcendent concepts.<sup>179</sup> In a socialist society, a particular role of the laity was to represent the spiritual dimension of human life.<sup>180</sup> Laypeople were considered “witnesses to Christ by example and words, in the family, work, neighborhood,” transcending to the realm of “participation in the struggle for a more humane and just

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173 AHAAH REC OP CAMAGÜEY Acción Profética Obispos... 292. Pág. 5.

174 AHAAH REC OP STA. CLARA Laicado, 312 Conciencia identidad cubana.

175 AHAAH REC AD PINAR DEL RIO Mensaje de la asamblea diocesana de la Reflexión Eclesial Cubana de Pinar del Río a las diócesis y al ENEC.

176 Tombs 2002, 133–134; Gutiérrez 2007, 26.

177 AHAAH REC OP MATANZAS Vida consagrada, A–2, p. 16 Opción pobres, servicio al pueblo.

178 AHAAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 9 Participación.

179 AHAAH REC OP STA. CLARA No Creyentes J–353.

180 AHAAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 41 Participación.

society,” but without losing their Christian identity.<sup>181</sup> They were the seeds of divine intermediation “in all domains of life: family, work, politics, social relations...”<sup>182</sup> In order to empower laity to increasingly bear witness, the clergy was to acknowledge the crucial role and irreplaceable labor of Cuban laity in evangelization and to support them in their daily mission.<sup>183</sup>

As the case of Figueroa Lombillo had suggested some years earlier, the emerging self-understanding of lay Catholics had begun to redefine religiosity as an individual right instead of a stigmatized burden in the revolution. In the early years of the 1980s, clergy repeatedly addressed the importance of empowering laity to defend their constitutional rights as religious persons under very trying conditions.<sup>184</sup> In Santa Clara, laypeople were both demanding more space and searching for more courage to “speak about our faith with the same liberty they speak about their ideology, in a critical and constructive manner, without arrogance.”<sup>185</sup> These voices represented the aim to empower lay communities in their identification as Catholics, and to reassure the revolutionary society on the constructive presence of Catholics. At the same time, the voices portrayed the growing confidence of lay Catholics in demanding recognition and respect for their engagement in Cuban social life.

Institutionally, Figueroa Lombillo’s case represented a culmination of the discourse on religious expression as a constitutional right of Cuban citizens, initiated within the Church already after ratification of the Constitution of 1976. Bishops and clergy were aware of the need to increase the knowledge of laity on their constitutional right to profess religion, and to claim recognition for the right from surrounding society.<sup>186</sup> Laypeople were instructed to inform both priests and civil authorities about cases of discrimination by appealing to the Constitution. Each diocese was to designate a person to specialize in addressing and resolving cases of discrimination.<sup>187</sup> As the specific case of Figueroa Lombillo also suggests, the Church had matured in its vision of reciprocal liberty: it no longer expected unconditional adherence to Catholicism from all Cubans, but instead discussed the importance of Catholics respecting the liberty of non-believers while also requiring respect for religious belief in the revolution.<sup>188</sup>

The evolving Church–State dynamics led to an emphasis on reconciliatory dialogue within the revolutionary reality. In continuation with Rene David’s pastoral theology, although rejecting its openly pronounced explorations into Marxist thought, reconciliation as an approach to engagement with the Cuban revolution gained support within the Church as a recurring theme from 1981 onwards. The importance of reconciliatory work was recognized by Catholics and non-Catholics alike, argued laypeople, claiming that “the will to reconcile is a condition for establishing and seeking communion” from Church to State. For this reason, clergy were also expected to pursue reconciliation as an ideal of pastoral work and actively promote

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181 AHAAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 41 Participación.

182 En todos los ordines de la vida: familia, trabajo, política, relaciones sociales... AHAAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 29 Participación.

183 AHAAH REC OP STA. CLARA Laicado, 297 Evangelización laicos.

184 For instance, AHAAH REC OP STA. CLARA Laicado, 304 Conducta ético-social; AHAAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 43 Magisterio (Obispos, sacerdotes).

185 Hablándole de nuestra fe con la misma libertad que ellos nos hablan de su ideología, con una actitud crítica, constructiva y sin arrogancia. AHAAH REC OP STA. CLARA No Creyentes J-356 Diálogo.

186 AHAAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA C. Cristiana 22 # 12 Constitución.

187 AHAAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Laicos 43 Magisterio (Obispos, sacerdotes).

188 AHAAH REC OP STA. CLARA No Creyentes A-1 y ss. Síntesis para una pastoral...

both the spirit and action of reconciliation in their communities.<sup>189</sup> Ultimately, the call for reconciliation also urged the Church itself to embrace “the love that is more powerful than divisions and animosities.”<sup>190</sup> As a powerful message from the grassroots level, bishops were also instructed by the laity to emphasize reconciliation in their relations to the State, and thus enable the Church to grow closer to the people.<sup>191</sup>

For individuals, reconciliation was produced through human encounters. In their search for participation, lay Catholics described daily dialogue with neighbors, coworkers, and fellow citizens as an opening towards mutual reconciliation. Despite theologies and policies drafted by the clergy, individual lay Catholics often did not seek to identify with the grand and coherent lines of ahistorical ideas. Instead, their Catholic reality was marked by small, inconsistent, profoundly human experiences and individual attempts to make sense of the everyday. By recognizing the shared emotions and sentiments of their peers in their daily lives, everyone was inevitably affected by the revolutionary reality and the course of the revolutionary process, to which they experienced varying degrees of assertive influence and power.<sup>192</sup> What mattered the most was wellbeing in daily life: the pursuit of happiness through the shared struggle of individuals to make the most of the everyday, in circumstances understood as increasingly challenging for all.<sup>193</sup>

Through these daily acts, laypeople’s voices called for respect for human experience in all its complexity from the leadership of both the Church and the revolution.<sup>194</sup> This entailed also recognizing criticism of the revolution by its militant supporters from their own daily perspectives; an increased sense of constructive criticism as a civic right and duty of all Cubans, even when done from within the revolutionary framework.<sup>195</sup> The discourse on accepted forms of expression, criticism, and signs of discontent relayed a deeper current of the revolution’s intention to contain and direct Cubans’ engagement and disaffection with the revolution. At the same time, these examples reveal that Catholics possessed a particular space for critical discourse within Cuban society.

*Vida Cristiana* reinforced for Catholic audiences nationwide the narrative of everyday signs of change and hope arising from the bottom up, discovered and embraced by the priest in the village of Cabanas some years earlier. An article entitled “The Church We Want to Be” questioned whether interpretations of diminishing religious belonging and spirituality corresponded to the realities experienced in the field by priests, religious orders, and laypeople. In the revolutionary reality, it was easier, the article stated, to recite the statistics on decline than

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189 AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA No Creyentes, J-357 Reconciliación; AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Líneas de Fuerza # 11 y 12 Comunión no creyentes; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA No. 29 Participación–diálogo.

190 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Mensaje A.D. # 26 Amigos de todos.

191 AHAH REC OP MATANZAS Obispos V-1 p. 1 Relaciones Obispos–Estado; AHAH REC OP STA. CLARA Vida consagrada A-3 Cercanía pueblo.

192 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA No. 33 Participación; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA B. nuevas 13 Participación en la vida del pueblo.

193 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA No. 28 Participación, diálogo; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA C. Cristiana 21#9 Acción profética.

194 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA Jóvenes 15 Acción profética.

195 AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA No. 28 Participación, diálogo; AHAH REC OP SANTIAGO DE CUBA C. Cristiana 21#9 Acción profética.

to “prove correct the effect of pastoral work directed to insert laity into the promotion of common good.” As the article concluded, the political level and visibility of the Church in the revolutionary society could not measure the impact of the Church and Catholic faith alone, because “in the Church, the most essential is often not to be seen.”<sup>196</sup> While summarizing the legitimization for the existence of the Church in a society built on materialist atheism, as a public message to all Cuban Catholics, the words also alluded to an existing reality under the surface. They suggested that within the revolutionary framework, in the everyday of the complexity of political conscience, compliancy, and conviction, a contesting form of identification and contestation was embedded in the invisible layers of religious Cubans living the revolution and revolutionary Cubans living their seemingly invisible religion.

### 3. A Church for the Timid

From the internal discourse of the Church, involving as it did the ecclesial hierarchy, diocesan and religious clergy, sisters of religious orders and large numbers of the laity, a vision of Cuban theology began to emerge. In the course of REC, the Cuban discourse of renewal also became a topic of international interest. As the Cuban Church delivered the conclusions of REC—forming the working basis for the next phase of reflection—to select Catholic audiences on a global level, it became subject to interpretations and, at times, pressure from the outside.

The document crafted as the expression of contemporary Cuban Catholicism faced harsh criticism—and with it, the theological and pastoral orientations of the Cuban Church were questioned. The Holy See and the Catholic Church in Spain were among the most active commentators, each imposing on the Cuban Church a more progressive vision of social and political participation. The very foundations of the Cuban process were met with criticism. Whereas Medellín built on Vatican II and Puebla on Medellín and Vatican II, the Cuban process took all three and attempted to process them simultaneously.<sup>197</sup> According to critics, this led to partial inclusions and assimilation of all of them, and to a profound and deep adoption of none of them.<sup>198</sup> In Cuba, Vatican II was never studied as a singular process; it became mirrored against the Latin American interpretations of it. As such, all three markers of theological development became processed and distilled through each other and used selectively to correspond to the “unprecedented” Cuban situation, as it was referred to by bishops.

New Cuban theology was problematic also from the Latin American perspective. A particular source of criticism was the strong focus on Puebla, ignoring and even disrupting the theological continuity of Latin American Catholicism from Vatican II to Medellín and Puebla: the Cuban Church was further criticized for “polishing off the edges” of Puebla in a manner that caused the Church to fall behind in the Latin American development of theology. At the same time, Medellín was not explicitly acknowledged as a reflexive framework.<sup>199</sup> The Spanish commentators also criticized that the Cuban interpretations of the ecclesiology emanating from

196 En la Iglesia, muchas veces, lo esencial no se ve. VC 1.12.1985 La Iglesia que queremos ser.

197 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Mons. Francois Gayot.

198 COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985.

199 COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985.

Vatican II, Medellín, and Puebla were not representative of the authentic visions of the processes themselves.<sup>200</sup>

The social consciousness of the Cuban Church was met with criticism by the Spanish Church for using the absence of Catholics in Cuba's political life as an argument for further isolation from social participation; according to Vatican II and papal magisterium, social commitment to the search for justice was not limited to political participation but stemmed from a moral commitment to social life.<sup>201</sup> Yet the Cuban vision of missionary evangelization was considered too politicized in its restricted nature. The cherished, distinctively Cuban concept of *testimonio* was criticized as a safe option; insisting on it as a viable concept in the Cuban context signaled that, ultimately, the Cuban vision of mission lacked "courage, bravery, risk."<sup>202</sup>

According to the Catholic Church in Spain, the Cuban vision of evangelization was too strongly mirrored against the political context:<sup>203</sup> the theological foundations of salvation and the prophetic mission of the Church emerging from the integral nature of salvation were not used as principles of reflection. The conclusions of REC were distorted by the lack of prophetic vision: the most prominent concepts of the post-conciliar Latin American Church, such as the Kingdom of God, historical Jesus, Exodus, the history of salvation, and liberation, were absent from theological reflection in Cuba. Spanish experts criticized the reflection for seemingly having taken place in complete isolation from Latin America. The process of REC showed that the Cuban Church was not in harmony with the theological paradigms it purported to uphold. From the perspective of supporters of more progressive theologies, critics found the disconnection worrying because it constituted a potential risk factor: something that could be developed and used as a counterforce to liberation theology and utilized as an ideological weapon against other theologies in Latin America.<sup>204</sup>

From the outside, the Cuban Church seemed timid and afraid of its fragility. The Holy See's Secretariat for Non-Believers scorned the draft for not offering concrete measures and tried to push the Cuban Church to engage in more proactive dialogue and cooperation with the government "in a society which the governmental authorities claim to model on the policy of atheism." The critique pushed the Church to question its own perception of what was possible to achieve within structural atheism; it began to conceptualize the critical function of Catholic faith in the case of Cuba in more ways than just *testimonio*. The office encouraged the Church to explore how Catholics could emerge into the public sphere, thereby creating more spaces of liberty in Cuba.<sup>205</sup>

According to foreign commentators, the Cuban Church had not sufficiently explored the interest of the Cuban government in political realignment with the Church.<sup>206</sup> Archival copies of the correspondence show that the paragraphs discerning Fidel Castro's interest in Christian political thought, liberation theology, and encouragement of the Church to explore these possible points of common interest were omitted from the copies of correspondence circulated more

200 COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985.

201 COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985.

202 COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985.

203 COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985.

204 COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985.

205 En una sociedad que las autoridades gubernamentales pretender modelar en línea atea. COCC ENEC P. Jordán Gallego, O.P. to Mons. Carlos M. de Céspedes 8.12.1985.

206 COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985.

widely among the episcopate. The sections that the general public never saw referred to constant, repeating encounters between Castro and representatives of the Cuban Church, encouraging the episcopate to explore the intentions of Castro at a time of difficulty for the Cuban revolution and revolutions in Latin America. As such, the Holy See further reinforced a progressive vision of Church–State cooperation, suggesting that the revolution could only sustain its vitality via a strategic alliance with Christianity, which, according to the Holy See, Fidel Castro had also come to understand.

In the eyes of the global Catholic community, the Cuban Church appeared timid and apprehensive. For Catholics in Miami, the Cuban discourse seemed too benign for the revolution; for Latin American churches, it did not bear enough resemblance to their own theological mission; and from European perspectives, the new Cuban theology was no longer European, but still lacked the transformational power of prophetic proclamation expected from Latin American churches.<sup>207</sup> The Cuban Church was reprimanded for lacking the spirit of the martyrs and a willingness to take risks for the sake of prophetic action.<sup>208</sup> On the island, the critique was met with dismay and a sense of disconnection and explained by the incapability of outsiders to comprehend the realities and conditions of ecclesial life in Cuba. This served to further emphasize and reinforce the Cuban experience of isolation within global Catholicism. While the Cuban Church was not disconnected, it considered itself misrepresented and alone. From this experience emerged a painful sense of the situation in Cuba being misinterpreted from the perspective of global Catholicism: from the outside, the Cuban Church seemed to balance between Europe and Latin America, measured from Europe with normativities of Latin American Catholic theologies and movements, while in Latin America considered an unfulfilled church still attempting to maintain its European legacy.

As the process of global commentaries shows, the attempt to construct an indigenous Cuban theology reflected the attempted balancing act of the Church both geographically and theologically. With respect to global Catholicism, the discourse shows the inevitable manner in which the Cuban Church was also in the middle of a contest over power and authority: between global and local, the centralizing, authoritative effort of the Holy See and the distribution of autonomy to local churches in Latin America. This became particularly apparent in the Cuban Church's stance on liberation theology. The discourse, largely omitted in documental traces of the theological reflection, yet vividly contested on the grassroots level, portrayed the global polarization of Catholic theology. Through this discourse, the Cuban Church was placed in the middle of contesting visions of Catholic social participation, the methodology of theology, and the legacy of Vatican II. The years of the Cuban Church executing REC coincided with the global discourse on the legitimacy and role of liberation theology. In the mid-1980s, an institutional campaign against liberation theology was launched from the Vatican. Traces of this tension seeped into the Cuban discourse on contextual theology: with its approach to liberation theology, the Cuban Church placed itself between traditional European Catholic theology and the emerging new theologies of Latin America.

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207 COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985.

208 COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985; AHAH ENEC Intervención de Pironio.

In Latin America, liberation theology had inspired a mass movement.<sup>209</sup> Yet from Vatican City, the central authority of the global Church was pushing back against liberation theology. In the fall of 1984, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith<sup>210</sup> published the *Instruction on Certain Aspects of “Theology of Liberation”* in which it called the Latin American theology “a perversion of the Christian message.”<sup>211</sup> As the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Joseph Ratzinger represented the authoritative voice on doctrine in the global church. Furthermore, the commentary was approved by Pope John Paul II, who had grown excessively critical of liberation theology. Casaroli, who had been warmly received in Cuba ten years prior, disassociated himself from the document with disapproval.<sup>212</sup> The second instruction on liberation theology by CDF was published in March 1986. Although it was less condemning in its critique,<sup>213</sup> its impact did not reach the Cuban Church in its intermittent phase from reflection to pastoral action.

While the Cuban Church aspired to become further integrated within the Latin American Catholic community, it also held its relations with the Vatican in high esteem since Holy See diplomacy had proven important for maintaining functional Church–State relations on the island, and the Cuban government had explicitly attempted to maintain diplomatic relations with the Holy See. This provides one explanation for why the Cuban Church never fully embraced liberation theology: in addition to the suspicion felt within the Cuban Church towards the more Marxist interpretations of liberation theology, which were of political interest to the Cuban government and further aroused dismay within the Church, the Holy See’s backlash against liberation theology also directed the Cuban Church’s course of theological reflection away from it. While liberation theologians sought to free themselves from the hegemony of Europe,<sup>214</sup> the Cuban Church found safety in the continuous presence of the Holy See and its intermediation with the revolution.

Even though the Cuban Church continued to seek further integration into Latin American theology, placing social consciousness and action at the heart of the Church’s mission, the forceful criticism of liberation theology from the Vatican was also carefully noted in Cuba. This led to disappointment and frustration among clerics more eager to employ liberation theology in the Cuban context as well—and it did little to stop them from doing so in their approach to daily pastoral work. Interviewees recount an atmosphere of excitement when discussing the small grassroots communities created in rural areas of the island, priests living within the *barrios* of workers and revolutionaries, sharing in their daily experiences and ministering to their needs.<sup>215</sup> In their daily spheres, these priests saw liberation theology as an inspiration for pastoral work and dialogue with the community; although they acknowledged the rebuttal by the Cuban episcopate, they nevertheless made space for personal theological discernment in their ministry and pastoral work.

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209 Gibson 2006, 197.

210 The CDF was, at the time, led by Joseph Ratzinger, who was considered to personify the opposition of the Holy See to liberation theology. German-born Ratzinger later became known as Pope Benedict XVI (2005–2013).

211 *Instruction on Certain Aspects on “Theology of Liberation”* 6.8.1984; Tombs 2002, 241–244; Hebblethwaite 2007, 216–220; Turner 2007, 229–230.

212 Hebblethwaite 1986, 71–72; Gibson 2006, 192–193, 196–199; Bingemer 2016, 29.

213 *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* 22.3.1986; Hebblethwaite 2007, 220–225.

214 Hebblethwaite 2007, 209.

215 Interview 23; Interview 24.

Economic factors also accounted for the Church's hesitation to fully embrace liberation theology. The Cuban Church received financial support for seminarians and retired clergy from Adveniat, a Catholic organization of German origin providing aid to Latin American churches. Archival sources point to the CELAM assembly in Medellín in 1968 as the original point of contact between the representative of Adveniat and Pedro Meurice.<sup>216</sup> From a global standpoint, the controversy surrounding Adveniat's influence in Latin America also originated in Medellín. In the years following the 1968 meeting and the emergence of liberation theology, more than a hundred German theologians criticized and publicly challenged Adveniat for interfering with the autonomy of Latin American churches by using their financial dependence on European aid as a method for opposing liberation theology from the outside: diverting economic relief away from Latin American projects associated with liberation theology, political theologies, or the Church of the Poor as an ecclesiological paradigm.<sup>217</sup>

Coinciding with the financial support the Cuban Church continued to receive from Adveniat, the Vatican supported Latin American bishops openly critical of liberation theology. For Latin American churches in the 1980s, a precondition for leadership was obedience to Rome, entailing rejection of liberation theology: the appointment of bishops was conditional upon their adherence to the Holy See's stance on liberation theology, which caused further controversy among the Latin American episcopate.<sup>218</sup> In Cuba, episcopal appointments were no exception. The CDF's rebuke of liberation theology was further enforced when Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, archbishop of Medellín and a member of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, was elected president of CELAM. Under his leadership, liberation theology was rejected as a continentally predominant approach in Latin America. Prominent Latin American theologians were thereafter institutionally silenced by the CDF, and the institutional campaign gave rise to a new traditionalist generation of theologians in Latin America.<sup>219</sup>

In Cuba, further rejection of liberation theology was implicitly present in the pastoral instruction issued by the episcopate as a guideline to applying the results of the reflection to local communities. Remarkably, the pastoral instruction referred to Paul VI's encyclical as a central inspiration for the Cuban vision of evangelization: published in 1975, ten years after Vatican II had concluded, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was read as a response to post-conciliar interpretations of human development as missionary action and the emphasis of liberation theology on social structures and Marxist analysis. The encyclical reinforced the role of Christocentric evangelization, stressing liberation in its eschatological meaning as liberation from sin and the Devil and salvation as eternity instead of an overturning of social reality. Similar views were later reinforced by John Paul II.<sup>220</sup> In Cuba, the strong focus placed on the encyclical marked another step away from liberation theology: it further led the Church to incorporate social justice and human promotion into evangelization, rejecting Marxist analysis as a methodological framework for pastoral work and thought in the revolutionary reality.

216 COCC AD Pedro Meurice Estiú to Paul Hoffacker 23.10.1968; Interview 3.

217 Dussel 1991, 323; Krier Mich 2004, 246.

218 Tombs 2002, 250–252; Gibson 2006, 197.

219 Hebblethwaite 1986, 86; Gibson 2006, 197; Hebblethwaite 2007, 211.

220 *Evangelii nuntiandi* 8.12.1975; Boff 1985, 31; Alejos-Grau & Saranyana 2002, 145; Carriquiry 2002, 244–245; Hebblethwaite 2007, 211–212.



Apart from the global Catholic community, the interval discourse of the Church was also criticized by non-Catholics in Cuba. On the island, the publicly perceived increase of social discourse within the Church was occasionally condemned as opportunism. To counter the claim, the Church issued a reminder of the missionary, expansive nature of Christianity: it was in the essence of the Church to grow, expand, and enter new areas, and the Cuban Church was finally acting upon this dimension of its self-understanding.<sup>221</sup> When communicating the orientation of the Church to the general public, opening oneself up to God and neighbor—which was considered to include all Cubans—became a point of emphasis. Openness was described as a prerequisite for evangelization: it would enable the gospel to arrive in all realities, including the socio-political circumstances to which the Cuban Church would enter as a servant of the nation. Yet, despite the inclusive discourse, throughout the process it was crucial for the Church to underscore that integration into the Cuban socio-political reality did not equal accepting or reinforcing it, let alone imposing on Cuban Catholics specific requirements of political orientation.<sup>222</sup>

Despite criticism, Catholic communities on the island experienced REC as a process of renewal with profound impact. The intention of coming together for reflection and discernment was understood as a recognition of changing visions and evolving ideas. For clergy, the process marked an outlined strategy for leaving the confines of the churches; for laity, it symbolized the appearance of the Church on the streets. REC was considered a crucial process for facilitating multifaceted, dynamic exchange: while it finally acknowledged the inevitably transformed reality of Cuban life, it also allowed a multitude of voices and narratives into the ecclesiological understanding of the role of the Church within the revolution.

#### 4. An Invitation to Reconciliation

As REC concluded with the drafting of a working document and diocesan commentaries on it, the new theological and pastoral visions of the Cuban Church were decided upon in a national synod entitled *Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano* (ENEC). The meeting was opened on February 17, 1986, and it lasted for four days, with 154 delegates from all seven dioceses discussing the future of the Cuban Church in Havana's clerical residence in the Vedado neighborhood. They were joined by international guests of honor as well as representatives of the Cuban government at the closing ceremony, a Mass open to the public in Havana's cathedral, on Sunday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February.<sup>223</sup> For Catholics around the island, the week of ENEC was declared a national week of prayer by the bishops, conveying the significance of the event to the whole Catholic community.<sup>224</sup>

The bishops considered ENEC a remarkable milestone for the Cuban revolution as well: the renewal of the Church coincided with the renewal of the revolution. As the congress of the Communist Party also convened in February 1986, the course of the revolution seemed to recognize the inevitable necessity of change.<sup>225</sup> During the course of preparing for ENEC, the

221 VC 8.12.1985 Hacia el Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano.

222 VC 8.12.1985 Hacia el Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano.

223 AHAH AC ENEC Preparación ENEC (Sta Clara); VC 1.12.1985 La Iglesia que queremos ser.

224 VC 1.12.1985 La Iglesia que queremos ser.

225 Pérez-Stable 2012, 123.

Episcopal Conference regularly convened with representatives of the government in “systemic encounters of the Conference with the supreme civic leaders of our country, to foster dialogue regarding a multitude of problems.”<sup>226</sup> For instance, in November 1985 a meeting discussing ENEC included Fidel Castro, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez (*Vicepresidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros*), and Dr. Carneado (*Jefe de la Oficina de Atención de Asuntos Religiosos del Comité Central de PCC*). This was described as the normal course of work between the Catholic Church and the Cuban State.<sup>227</sup> As such, the multiple meetings between bishops and Fidel Castro took on a state of normalcy over the course of 1985, marking a shift in dynamics after years without any direct sustained relations between the Cuban episcopate and revolutionary leadership; earlier communication had been intermediated by the diplomatic representation of the Holy See. However, at time when the revolution seemed to be redirecting its course, the Church again voiced its emerging participation in the construction of *patria* through active social engagement.

Representatives of the Cuban government were invited to ENEC as visitors out of courtesy. The government was not offered a role in the discourse, nor were its representatives invited to observe the meetings discussing intra-ecclesial matters; they were invited to the closing ceremony rather late in the process, in mid-February.<sup>228</sup> An invitation was also sent to Fidel Castro, with the choice of words referring to Castro’s ability to see the importance of ENEC not only for the Church but also for the Cuban people. A strategic choice was made to explain the inconvenience of Sunday’s early hours to Fidel Castro by the desire of the participants to return to their cities in order to attend their jobs and studies next morning<sup>229</sup>—to again engage in the daily life of the revolution and renew their commitment to the construction of *patria*. The next day, Castro himself traveled to the Soviet Union and participated in the XXVIII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.<sup>230</sup> It was also brought to Castro’s attention that his presence would not only appear as an honor for the Cuban delegates; the international invitees were also “extremely interested” to encounter Castro in an ecclesial context.<sup>231</sup> Inscribed in the cordial invitation was the global dimension of Catholicism: the good publicity it would produce for the Cuban government to be present at a meeting garnering international attention. This again followed the well-established diplomatic vision of the Holy See in recognizing the motivations of the communist government for positive acknowledgment globally.

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226 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz 10.2.1986; COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Dr. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez 11.12.1986; COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Dr. José Felipe Carneado 10.2.1986.

227 Encuentros sistemáticos que está sosteniendo la Conferencia con las máximas autoridades civiles de nuestro país, para dialogar acerca de diversos problemas. VC 8.12.1985 Conferencia Episcopal de Cuba; Kirk 1989, 153.

228 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Dr. José M. Miyar 11.2.1986; COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Dr. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez 11.12.1986; COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Dr. José Felipe Carneado 10.2.1986. Later documentation shows that also Dr. Ricardo Alarcon, Vice Minister of MINREX, participated in the ENEC. AHAH ENEC SESION 26 Palabras pronunciadas en la sesión de clausura del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano por el Excmo. Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera, Obispo de Camagüey y Presidente de la Conferencia Episcopal Cubana 23.2.1986.

229 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz 10.2.1986.

230 Congresos del PCC.

231 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz 10.2.1986.

Through the international exchange, ENEC also decided who participated and defined the boundaries of the Cuban Church in the dynamics of global Catholicism. The Holy See's presence on the island continued to be appreciated while the Cuban Church also sought to join in the Latin American theological discourse after voicing its own preconditions.<sup>232</sup> Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, president of the Pontifical Committee for the Laity,<sup>233</sup> arrived in Cuba as the representative of the Roman Curia and the Holy See, which gave ENEC magisterial authority and legitimacy from the central government of the global Church.<sup>234</sup> His presence had been requested by the Cuban Church itself to emphasize and enhance the role of the laity; furthermore, Pironio was Latin American and had visited Cuba earlier, making a good impression on the clergy and laity.<sup>235</sup> Pironio's presence had also been affirmed and encouraged directly by Pope John Paul II.<sup>236</sup> Thus, his participation again showed the desire of the Cuban Church to remain close to the Holy See and include voices from the Vatican—consequently leading to further institutional rejection of liberation theology.

During the drafting of ENEC's working document, a suggestion had been made to include experts from CELAM in the process, but Cubans ultimately deemed it unnecessary to employ external auditors and specialists in the discussion.<sup>237</sup> Both CELAM and Adveniat were included in ENEC, but more as observers than agents in the discourse. While also portraying the will of the Cuban Church to strike a balance between European and Latin American Catholicism, the decision emphasized the autonomy that Cuban Catholics wished to manifest not only towards the revolution, but also towards the global Catholic community.

As a whole, the composition of the invitees present at ENEC reflected the shift in geographical focus.<sup>238</sup> The majority of foreign ecclesial dignitaries arrived from Latin America. Among others, CELAM's General Secretary Darío Castrillón was invited to orientate discourse and to gain first-hand experience of the Cuban context for Latin American Catholicism.<sup>239</sup> CELAM also appointed two lay participants as representatives of the Latin American Church based on a request by the Cuban Church; it was instrumental for Cubans to highlight the scope of ENEC through bridging ecclesial ranks to the voices of the laity.<sup>240</sup> From Latin America and the Caribbean, several national Catholic prelates also joined the meeting. Bishops from Jamaica,<sup>241</sup> Puerto Rico,<sup>242</sup> and the Dominican Republic<sup>243</sup> were invited to note the roots of the

232 AHAAH ENEC SESION 6 Historia de la evangelización y sus lecciones 18.2.1986.

233 In Latin, *Consilium pro Laicis*; in Spanish, *Pontificio Consejo para los Laicos*.

234 COCC ENEC Agostino Cardinal Casaroli to Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera 7.12.1985; COCC ENEC Invitados extranjeros que han confirmado su asistencia al ENEC; COCC ENEC Relación de invitados al Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano (ENEC).

235 ENEC COCC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Emmo. Sr. Cardenal Agostino Casaroli 7.11.1985.

236 AHAAH ENEC SESION 26 Palabras pronunciadas en la sesión de clausura del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano por el Excmo. Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera, Obispo de Camagüey y Presidente de la Conferencia Episcopal Cubana. 23.2.1986; AHAAH ENEC SESION 26 Palabras pronunciadas por Su Eminencia El Cardenal Eduardo Pironio durante la sesión de clausura del ENEC.

237 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Darío Castrillón 6.11.1985.

238 In written documents, the shift is best acknowledged as a conscious choice in the preparatory documents of the diocesan assembly of Havana. For instance, AHAAH REC AD LA HABANA Futuro de la Iglesia.

239 ENEC COCC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez to Excmo. Mons. Darío Castrillón 6.11.1985.

240 COCC ENEC Invitados al Encuentro Nacional Eclesial; ENEC COCC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez to Excmo. Mons. Darío Castrillón 6.11.1985.

241 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Mons. Samuel Emmanuel Carter 24.12.1985.

242 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Mons. Juan Fremiot Torres Oliver 7.11.1985.

243 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Nicolás de Jesús López Rodríguez.

Cuban Church in continental Spanish Catholicism.<sup>244</sup> The presence of an El Salvadorian bishop was requested in order to “bring us even closer to the church in Central America.”<sup>245</sup> A Jesuit father, as the representative of CLAR (*Confederación Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Religiosos*) was invited, with the idea he would pay particular attention to members of religious orders in Cuba.<sup>246</sup> With these invitees, the discussions and debates at ENEC clearly proposed further integration into Latin American Catholicism.<sup>247</sup> Although theologians representing liberation theology were not invited, in several exchanges between Cuban lay delegates to ENEC and the foreign Catholic participants questions were asked about Ecclesial Base Communities,<sup>248</sup> indicating a recurring interest in further exploring liberation theology.<sup>249</sup>

Only a handful of representatives from European Catholicism were invited. From Spain, the Archbishop of Seville was invited as the sole representative of Cuba’s long Catholic tradition.<sup>250</sup> Among the most remarkable invitees was Emil L. Stehle, the director of Adveniat, who was asked to stay in Cuba after ENEC’s conclusion to discuss future projects and visit rural dioceses. His presence marked the continuous collaboration of the Cuban Church with Adveniat despite the controversies surrounding the German organization’s intervention in liberation theology. However, Stehle’s attendance for the full duration of ENEC was not considered necessary,<sup>251</sup> which suggests that Adveniat was not to play a doctrinal role in the process despite the pre-existing financial connections and Adveniat’s effort to subvert the influence of liberation theology. The strong presence of the Holy See and Adveniat nevertheless provided further evidence of the theological orientation of the Cuban Church: into Latin America but away from liberation theology.

Remarkably, only one bishop from the United States, fluent in Spanish, was invited. The rector of Miami’s Catholic seminary was asked to join him.<sup>252</sup> Their presence was requested on equally ecclesial, national, and spiritual grounds, foregoing the revolution’s complex relationship with the United States. “Since we started the preparation for the meeting,” argued Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera, “it seemed to us that the part of our people and our Church that resides

244 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Carlos Amigo Vallejo 7.11.1985.

245 Acercarnos aún más a la Iglesia en América Central. COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Arturo Rivera Damas 7.11.1985.

246 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Rvdo. P. Luis Ugalde S.J. 7.11.1985; COCC ENEC Luis Ugalde S.J. to Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera 15.1.1986.

247 For instance, SESION 6 Acta Sesión 6: Historia y sus lecciones (debate); SESION 8 Resumen de la reflexión de equipo “Situación de la Iglesia en Cuba.”

248 *Comunidades Eclesiales del Base* (CEB) were instrumental in the pastoral framework of liberation theology in Latin America. For their significance in Cuban pastoral work, see Kuivala 2016.

249 AHAH ENEC INTER Palabras del Padre Joao Edenio Rey Valle / La noche del 18 de febrero de 1986 en el ENEC, durante la sesión efectuada entre los invitados y los delegados. Tema: comunidades eclesiales del base; AHAH ENEC INTER Palabras del Monseñor McGrath, Obispo de Panamá, sobre el tema “Comunidades del base” en el ENEC.

250 COCC ENEC Carlos Amigo Vallejo to Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera 2.1.1986.

251 COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Emil L. Stehle 7.11.1985; COCC ENEC Invitados extranjeros que han confirmado su asistencia al ENEC; COCC ENEC Relación de invitados al Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano (ENEC).

252 COCC ENEC Invitados al Encuentro Nacional Eclesial.

abroad should be present, in some manner, in it.”<sup>253</sup> This reflected the recognition of the Cuban diaspora experience also from a distinctively Catholic perspective on the island.

Despite the prominent list of international invitees, the discourse directed by Cubans stemmed from experiences on the island. As such, the very way in which the representatives of global Catholicism were designated could also be seen as a commentary on the misrepresentations of Cuban Catholicism, on outsider visions of Church–State relations, and on the lack of recognition of the Cuban Church in global Catholicism, according to both the experiences of and discussions by Cuban prelates and clergy in particular. Although the cardinals and bishops arriving for the congress grounded the Cuban Church in networks of global Catholicism, their presence also evoked bitterness among Cuban delegates: “It was the first time the foreign church took interest in this church that had suffered so much, and continued to suffer,” remarked a Cuban participant at ENEC.<sup>254</sup>

As suggested by the quote, the empowering effect of ENEC was in its nature as an intrinsically Cuban project, arising from and corresponding to the Cuban context, with its distinct features and peculiarities. ENEC was a national effort, stemming from the local context and building on the legacy of grassroots reflection conducted in the course of REC. The conclusions of REC, consequently, formed the working draft for ENEC, directing both the items of attention and approaches to the discourse. Whereas REC had served as an opening within the Church, ENEC was voiced as an opening from the Church to the revolution and the Cuban State. In preceding years, through internal discourse and a renewed sense of identity the Church had already learned to live with the reality of the revolution; the central motivation of ENEC was to emerge into public life *within* the revolutionary reality. While it did not automatically amount to full assimilation and acceptance of the revolutionary paradigms, it resulted in a more immediate form of outreach towards the revolutionary society:

The ecclesial community lives in and empowers the concrete cultural reality in which it is incarnated. In our case, Cuba: the one that already is and the one we dream to it to be; the Cuba of positive achievements and wonderful projects, and the Cuba of frustrations and limitations.<sup>255</sup>

Through ENEC, the Cuban Church voiced its intention to serve the Cuban people as a distinctively Cuban Church. For this purpose, ENEC was also a communicative event, marking the reappearance of the institutional church into public life and public discourse in the revolution. Media reports broadcasted news of the Church’s opening towards the revolution on a global scale,<sup>256</sup> making it also into a self-generating process of exposure and attention. As the

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253 Desde que iniciamos la preparación del encuentro, nos pareció que la parte de nuestro pueblo y de nuestra Iglesia que reside en el extranjero debería estar presente, de algún modo, en el mismo. COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Sr. Pbro. Felipe Estévez 7.11.1985.

254 Fue la primera vez que se interesó la Iglesia de fuera con esta Iglesia que había sufrido tanto y que seguía sufriendo. Interview 4.

255 La comunidad eclesial - - vive y potencia en la realidad cultural concreta en la que se encarna. En nuestro caso, Cuba: la que ya es y la que soñamos que sea, la de las realizaciones positivas y proyectos hermosos y la de las frustraciones y limitaciones. COCC ENEC Vida Cristiana: Algunos elementos para un discernimiento teológico que ayude a orientar la vida y la misión de la Iglesia en Cuba.

256 For instance, COCC ENEC Stan Rougier to Carlos M. de Céspedes; COCC ENEC Carlos M. de Céspedes to Stan Rougier 16.1.1986; COCC ENEC Havana Radio: Panama Archbishop Rejects Aid to Contrás 21.2.1986. An entire collection of documents regarding the media relations and communication strategy of ENEC is located at the Archive of the Cuban Catholic Bishops’ Conference (COCC). The collection is indicative of a large number of inquiries, commentaries, and pieces published on ENEC by international media. An overarching, recurring

media coverage viewed ENEC in a favorable light, the global exposure was also beneficial for the Cuban government, and thus it contributed to the emerging dialogue; it was in the interest of the revolution to engage with an internationally appreciated discourse. Taking advantage of this opening, *Vida Cristiana* was used as a channel to popularize the results of REC and visions of ENEC through a well-coordinated communicative effort to Cuban audiences.<sup>257</sup> Through *Vida Cristiana*, it was explained to the masses that the reflection was deeply rooted in the Bible, in authentic tradition and papal *magisterium*, in conciliar theology, and in the teachings of the bishops. Theologically, religious authorities pronounced that ENEC was in continuity with Vatican II, Medellín, and Puebla, as well as with the teachings of the most recent Popes.<sup>258</sup>

During the four days of ENEC, the sessions consisted of presentations and discussions in predetermined working groups. Laypeople and clergy worked in separated preparatory groups, with three dioceses represented in each group. Presenting the themes and topics to the groups were clergy, members of religious orders, and laity from the preparatory committees.<sup>259</sup> The voices heard at ENEC were Cuban voices from within the Church and the revolutionary reality, acknowledging and discussing the interchangeably Cuban nature of the Church. As such, ENEC was considered an event of consolidation for the self-understanding of the Church in Cuba, but also for public recognition of Catholicism in the revolution. Inscribed in the process was also the recognition of the Cuban Church as a minority in the socialist society.<sup>260</sup>

The everyday of Catholicism in revolutionary Cuba remained at the center of the new pastoral orientation and theological frameworks. The final document from ENEC, a statement issued as a result of the years of reflection, was organized according to the *ver-juzgar-actuar* method. The first part acknowledged both the historical and present realities of the Church in Cuba; the second part analyzed the situation in light of theological paradigms and contemporary Catholic discourse; the third and final part oriented the conclusions towards action in evangelization. Lived experience was both the point of departure and the final destination of theological reflection and pastoral action.<sup>261</sup> With 152 pages of reflection and reorientation, the final document argued for the repositioning of the Cuban Church embedded in the contemporary discourse and realities of Cuba, Latin America, and global Catholicism.<sup>262</sup>

For practicing Catholics, ENEC was a unifying event. An example of this was the large number of telegrams and phone calls by laypeople arriving from each region of the island to Havana's *Casa Sacerdotal*, where the meeting was held.<sup>263</sup> One particular group of messages

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theme is the significance of media coverage on the event for the emerging Church–State relations, and the clear sense of the importance of media visibility within the Church.

257 COCC ENEC Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Carlos Manuel de Céspedes 10.10.1985.

258 COCC ENEC *Vida Cristiana*: Algunos elementos para un discernimiento teológico que ayude a orientar la vida y la misión de la Iglesia en Cuba.

259 COCC ENEC *Vida Cristiana*: Algunos elementos para un discernimiento teológico que ayude a orientar la vida y la misión de la Iglesia en Cuba.

260 For instance, SESION 8 Resumen de la reflexión de equipo “Situación de la Iglesia en Cuba.”

261 COCC ENEC *Vida Cristiana*: Algunos elementos para un discernimiento teológico que ayude a orientar la vida y la misión de la Iglesia en Cuba; COCC ENEC Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera to Excmo. Mons. Carlos Amigo Vallejo 7.11.1985.

262 AHAH ENEC SESION 23 Acta sesión 23 – Grandes opciones y futuro proyecto, debate 22.2.1986.

263 AHAH ENEC SESION 26 Palabras pronunciadas en la sesión de clausura del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano por el Excmo. Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera, Obispo de Camagüey y Presidente de la Conferencia Episcopal Cubana. 23.2.1986.

consisted of the greetings arriving from Catholic communities in Miami.<sup>264</sup> In the experiences of Cuban laity on the island, the vision of ENEC towards Cuban society was built on openness and dialogue as integral dimensions of publicly proclaimed Catholic faith. Consequently, since many felt ENEC allowed them both visibility and a voice in the public sphere of the revolution, ENEC gained significance as a process of healing and recovery.<sup>265</sup> In Cuban society and the revolutionary reality, ENEC promoted dialogue among Cubans with the public initiation of a reconciliatory process by the Church.<sup>266</sup> Emerging in the mid-1980s, the emphasis coincided and concurred with both the newly established dialogue with Cubans in diaspora and the so-called rectification process initiated by the revolutionary leadership.

Central to ENEC was its emphasis on reconciliation as the foundation of both pastoral work and social relations in Cuba.<sup>267</sup> The Church was called on to reconcile not only relations between God and humans, but also relations among the Cuban people: groups divided by religion, socio-political thought, and philosophical ideas in the context of the structural, militant atheism that penetrated all sectors of society. The Church assumed “part of the responsibility regarding tensions and divisions of various kinds that weight upon our people,” and it asked forgiveness for “everything that in our past and our present life has not contributed to the solidarity of different groups that form our people.”<sup>268</sup>

The Church insisted that reconciliation did not require uniformity in thoughts and action; instead, it required “clear and respectful discernment of the shared elements as well as the differences and conflicts,” based on the mutual desire to maintain “reconciliatory dialogue.”<sup>269</sup> In this interpretation, the Cuban Church relied heavily on Pope Paul VI’s definition of the Church as primarily a spiritual domain, not framing itself as a political actor or an alternative to the prevailing political order. The Catholic initiative on reconciliation also proposed a new perspective on analyzing the internal dynamics of discourse within the revolutionary reality. Reflecting the growing sense of shared realities and building on the interpretations discussed and envisioned at ENEC, a strong focus on reconciliation through unity emerged. At the same time, the acceptance of diversity was signaled more towards the spheres outside the Church: the frameworks of the revolution and Cuban society. Within the Church, paradoxically, uniformity was considered a means of preserving the vitality of religion in the revolution. Consequently, the ideal was reinforced and legitimized by the Church among its own ranks.

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264 COCC ENEC Ernesto García Rubio to Conferencia Episcopal Cubana 28.2.1986; COCC ENEC Unidos todos por la reunión de la Iglesia en Cuba 21.2.1986.

265 For instance, AHAH ENEC VISITA Palabras del Padre José Félix Pérez, Rector del Seminario San Carlos en la Velada Cultura 19.2.1986.

266 For instance, AHAH ENEC SESION 8 Resumen de la reflexión de equipo “Situación de la Iglesia en Cuba.”

267 For instance, SESION 8 Resumen de la reflexión de equipo “Situación de la Iglesia en Cuba.”

268 Su cuota de responsabilidad con relación a las tensiones y divisiones de variado género que pesan sobre nuestro pueblo. - - Por todo lo que en nuestra historia pasada y en nuestra vida actual no haya contribuido a la solidaridad entre los distintos grupos humanos que componen nuestro pueblo. COCC ENEC Documento del Trabajo.

269 Un discernimiento claro y respetuoso de los elementos comunes y de las diferencias y conflictos. - - el dialogo reconciliador. COCC ENEC Documento del Trabajo.

## 5. The Past and the Production of History

Within the Church, ENEC was understood not only as a process of reflection and discourse but also as a profoundly spiritual journey.<sup>270</sup> In the course of meetings, in sessions, discussions, and debates, the participants came together to celebrate Mass, pray, and read the Bible.<sup>271</sup> In local communities, the reflection was supported by daily prayers, adoration of the Eucharist, with particular incentives for prayer, and rosary prayers addressing the process.<sup>272</sup> The future of the Cuban Church was contemplated and discerned through prayer.

By entrusting the future of the Church to divine providence and emphasizing the collective, a simultaneously immanent and transcendent process of growth through divine providence, participants in ENEC shared a sense of godly participation through human action. As was emphasized in Holguín, the task of men was to “be available for the call of the Holy Spirit in the Church as individuals and a community.”<sup>273</sup> According to Camagüey’s Bishop Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera, the course of ENEC had proceeded by the grace of God: “This little history of ours, You are weaving it thread by thread; with threads we sometimes do not understand but are an expression of wisdom, goodness, and liberty we are not made to understand.”<sup>274</sup>

As the quote suggests, closely intertwined with the sense of transcendent intermediation throughout ENEC, and linked with reconciliation as a theological concept, was the nature of ENEC as a historiographical process. The Cuban Church was understood as a pilgrim church, on its way in a specific historical context, yet rooted in and marching towards fulfillment in the transcendent.<sup>275</sup> ENEC marked both the end of the reflection process and the beginning of a journey. While it mapped the histories of Cuban Catholicism and strongly contributed to establishing a shared historiographical paradigm for the Church in the revolution, in its self-identification it drew from a sense of beginning. ENEC was not considered a finale, but rather a new stage, providing the impulse for maturing theological and pastoral reflection. At the same time,

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270 For instance, MDLC REC Aportes al Documento de consulta de la Reflexión Eclesial Cubana. Diócesis de Holguín. Presentación.

271 For instance, AHAH ENEC SESION 1 Acta sesión 1: Apertura; AHAH ENEC SESION 24 Acta Sesión 24: Votación final.

272 For instance, AHAH ENEC SANTA CLARA Preparación ENEC.

273 AHAH REC AD LA HABANA Homilía inauguración asamblea diocesana; AHAH REC AD MATANZAS Al Pueblo de Dios de Matanzas; AOH REC Reflexión Eclesial Cubana, Asamblea Diocesana, Holguín; AHAH REC AD Asambleas Diocesanas: Introducción; AOH REC Crónica de un encuentro; AOH REC Misa de Clausura de la Asamblea Diocesana de Holguín; APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín / Tema: La oración; APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín 31.7.1985; AOH ENEC Discurso inaugural del ENEC, pronunciado por Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez, presidente de la Conferencia Episcopal de Cuba, en nombre de los obispos cubanos; AHAH ENEC SESION 26 Palabras pronunciadas en la sesión de clausura del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano por el Excmo. Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera, Obispo de Camagüey y Presidente de la Conferencia Episcopal Cubana. 23.2.1986; AHAH SESION 26 Homilía en la Misa de Clausura; AHAH ENEC SESION 25 Acta Sesión 25: Sesión Abierta 22.2.1986; AHAH ENEC SESION 26 Acta Sesión 26: Clausura 23.2.1986.

274 AHAH ENEC SESION 26 Palabras pronunciadas en la sesión de clausura del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano por el Excmo. Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera, Obispo de Camagüey y Presidente de la Conferencia Episcopal Cubana 23.2.1986.

275 AHAH ENEC SESION 26 Palabras pronunciadas por Su Eminencia El Cardenal Eduardo Pironio durante la sesión de clausura del ENEC.



the legitimacy of ENEC was founded in its continuity with the past<sup>276</sup>, much like the historiographical legitimacy with which the course of the revolution was explained and its grand narrative argued for.

In the mid-1980s, the Catholic and revolutionary narratives met in an unprecedented way. Coinciding with the production of narratives of Catholic histories through ENEC was the publication of Fidel Castro's book on religion in the revolution in late 1985. When *Fidel y la religión*, a book on Castro's conversations with Brazilian Catholic priest Frei Betto of the Dominican Order, was published in Cuba in January 1985, it seemed like "the whole world"<sup>277</sup> was anxious to find out what their leader had to say about religion. Everybody on the island was reading the book, or so it seemed: workers sitting in the back of collective traffic trucks in the morning, Cubans on their porches at night before going to bed, grandparents and working-age adults alike.<sup>278</sup> The clergy took particular pride in the claim that the number of copies of *Fidel y la religión* sold on the island exceeded the sale of Che Guevara's diary, and they relished the sight of militant communists lining up outside bookstores in pouring rain to acquire their copy in the days following its publication.<sup>279</sup>

The publication of the book marked an official recognition of religion in the revolution by the Cuban State and government. Alonso Tejada suggests that the publication of and narratives presented in *Fidel y la religión* pertain to the rectification discourse of the mid-1980s itself, an attempt to correct formerly established discriminatory policies on religion.<sup>280</sup> According to Veltmeyer and Rushton, the reasons for rectification were found in widespread corruption, crime, a declining revolutionary spirit, and growing inequalities.<sup>281</sup> Initiated in 1986, the rectification program became a discourse addressing not only politics and the economy, but also revolutionary participation and morals. It referred to the correction of past policies proven outdated, inadequate, or no longer corresponding to reality. The process carried a populist undercurrent, as it attempted to bestow renewed agency on citizens acting on behalf of State machinery.<sup>282</sup> At the same time, as argued by Pérez-Stable, "rectification relied primarily on moral principles to safeguard the exercise of power" for the revolutionary leadership and Party.<sup>283</sup> The rectification campaign resulted in a recentralization of power in decision-making, a reduction of material incentives, an expansion of moral persuasion, and the reinforcement of voluntary labor.<sup>284</sup>

Scholarly work generally concludes that the book, as it was published by the Council of State, represented a remarkable gesture by the Cuban Communist Party towards the Catholic Church and laid the groundwork for increasing dialogue as a mutually beneficial approach to

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276 APMC Aportes al documento de consulta de la reflexión eclesial cubana, Diócesis de Holguín 31.7.1985; COCC ENEC Instrucción pastoral de los obispos Cuba con motivo de la promulgación del documento final del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano. Mayo 1986.

277 *Todo el mundo* is a popular expression in Cuba, translating as "everyone". Interview 4.

278 Interview 5.

279 Interview 4.

280 Alonso Tejada 1999, 39.

281 Veltmeyer & Rushton 2012, 107.

282 Padula & Smith 1996, 165–166; Pérez-Stable 2012, 128.

283 Pérez-Stable 2012, 128.

284 Veltmeyer & Rushton 2012, 106.

coexistence.<sup>285</sup> As the Church remarked, it was people outside the immediate spheres of ecclesial life that took the most interest in the book.<sup>286</sup> For the great majority of Cubans, the book marked a return of religion to the public sphere; for many, it did so in a surprising and sudden way. Most importantly, and rather shockingly for some of the most vehement opponents of religion embedded in the revolution, it was Fidel himself who broke the silence. According to an oral history with one priest, that led Cubans to an inevitable conclusion: religion had surfaced and was approved of in public revolutionary discourse once again. According to the priest, Cubans on the streets were asking each other, “if *Lider Máximo* is talking about religion, could we also? Is it now okay to talk about the Church?”<sup>287</sup>

In the book, Fidel Castro discussed his personal history as an alumni of a Jesuit school, the initial reactions of the Church to the revolution, what Castro pronounced as the sources of Church–State confrontation, and the policies of the Cuban government on religion.<sup>288</sup> The narrative presented by Castro placed the Cuban Church in intrinsic juxtaposition with the revolution, building on the presupposition of binaries and confrontation. As such, it ultimately failed to acknowledge the complex layers of engagement and presence of Catholics in the everyday of the revolutionary reality, the emerging accommodation of lay Catholics with the revolutionary process, and the double identities of both Catholicism and patriotic Cubanness realized in the performance of the revolution.

The book also reinforced theological interpretations dismissed by the Cuban episcopate: Betto’s commitment to liberation theology and the influence drawn from Marxism made him a compatible discussant with Castro,<sup>289</sup> but the Cuban episcopate rejected the discourse. Within the leadership of the Cuban Church, Castro’s dialogue with Betto on liberation theology was also seen as another foreign influence placing the Cuban Church in a space of otherness within the revolution, with the revolution imposing norms on desirable Catholic thought as well. At the same time, it must be noted that excluded from this institutional rejection of Fidel’s construction of Catholic social doctrine were those clerics and laypeople eager to explore the junctions of liberation theology and the revolution: for them, the discourse by Castro provided further openings into revolutionary participation, yet created more tension and competing visions within the Church.

From the perspective of the Church, *Fidel y la religión* was a selective account, fueled by political motivations and attempts at strategic alliances through favorable publicity both domestically and internationally.<sup>290</sup> A recurring narrative in Castro’s view of Catholicism in the revolution was the Church as a representative of the prerevolutionary elite, foreign interests,

285 Kirk 1989, 162–169; Pedraza 2007, 243; Hearn 2008, 140; Schmidt 2015, 245.

286 Interview 6.

287 Y entonces preguntaron, si es el Líder Máximo que ahora habla de la religión, ¿nosotros también lo podemos hacer? ¿Ahora si se puede hablar de la Iglesia? Interview 14.

288 Fidel y la religión 1985, 141–155, 191–194, 203, 211, 213–217, 223–227, 277–278; Interview 16.

289 Betto has maintained a close relationship with Cuba following the publication of *Fidel y la religión*. In the course of fieldwork for this study, Betto visited Cuba in January 2015. The visit included a meeting and a discussion with Fidel Castro “in an affectionate atmosphere, characteristic of the extended, fraternal relationship between Fidel and Betto,” as described by *Granma*, the official publication of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. Recibe Fidel a Frei Betto, *Granma* 28.1.2015.

290 A similar argument has been made by John C. Super, who calls *Fidel y la religión* “a barometer for measuring historiographic tendencies” for Church–State relations and religion in the revolution. See Super 2003.

and colonial hegemony. As a cure, Castro presented a mutually compatible alliance of Christianity and socialism, already bolstered by Latin American priests committed to social change. Castro himself, in his own words, was among the more moderate communists on the island, searching for points of dialogue with the Church.<sup>291</sup>

What the production of new historiographical normativity suggests is that it was considered relevant to reinforce the revolutionary narrative of Church–State relations as pronounced by the revolution’s leadership. As such, the work presented an interpretation of religion in the revolution as defined by the State. Fitting neatly into the grand narrative of the revolution, Castro’s reflections contradicted the histories recounted within the Church. Histories of the Church and State were placed into the discursive frames of the revolution, and a politicized production of historical knowledge was executed through the accounts of the life of the Church on the island by Castro. As such, the much-applauded publication was also a problematic from the perspective of historiographical production for the Church.

With the published account of Castro’s version of Church–State interactions, many within the Church, both clergy and laity, felt yet again publicly written out of the revolution’s history, while the newly pronounced histories continued to establish and reinforce a revolutionary narrative of ecclesial life on the island. The histories recounted by Castro were not the histories all Cuban Catholics could recognize as their own. On personal, intimate levels, Catholics rejected these histories precisely because they were not connect with their experiences and memories.<sup>292</sup> Yet simultaneously, from a distance it seemed that the Church had finally been written back into the history of the revolution, acknowledged in the discursive frames of the State. In public, less attention and discourse were generated on the narrative nature of the history presented by Castro. Oral histories of first-hand witnesses countered the accounts presented in the book yet were rarely pronounced openly on the island.

With ENEC, the Church was presented with an opportunity to respond to the historiographic normativity produced in *Fidel y la religión*. As a public event, ENEC was a manifestation of the Church’s history in its own words.<sup>293</sup> As a process emphasizing the autonomy of the Cuban Church within the revolution, ENEC marked a chance for the autonomous production of an ecclesial history as pronounced by the Church itself. In the inaugural discourse at ENEC, Bishop Adolfo Rodríguez recognized the history of the Cuban Church in the revolution in an exceptionally straightforward way:

Our Christians chose dialogue from the start, when dialogue was nothing more than nostalgia. They chose openness when the doors seemed closed and the blinds were shut in the windows; they chose evangelization when our pastoral work was no more than “silent testimony”; they chose incarnation when they were told that religion could not educate good citizens, because its supernatural nature makes them suspicious with matters of natural nature.<sup>294</sup>

291 For instance, *Fidel y la religión* 1985, 226–230, 244–248, 249–250, 279–280.

292 Interview 4; Interview 6.

293 AHAH ENEC DS Holguín Aportes al Documento del Trabajo del ENEC; Interview 4.

294 Nuestros cristianos optaron desde el primer momento por el diálogo cuando el diálogo todavía no era más que una nostalgia. Optaron por la apertura cuando las puertas parecían estar cerradas y las cortinas bajadas; optaron por la evangelización cuando no íbamos en nuestra pastoral más allá del llamado “testimonio silencioso”; optaron por la encarnación cuando se decía que la religión no puede formar ciudadanos buenos porque su carácter sobrenatural los hace sospechosos en asuntos de carácter natural. AOH ENEC Discurso inaugural del ENEC, pronunciado por Mons. Adolfo Rodríguez, presidente de la Conferencia Episcopal de Cuba, en nombre de los obispos cubanos; Adolfo Rodríguez 17.2.1986.

In its simplicity, the discourse presented a counter-narrative to the grand narrative of the revolution and its rhetoric of the Church as an alien, foreign, privileged institution, and of Catholics as a group of reactionary dissidents. What was instead portrayed by the bishops was a narrative drawing on the perseverance, resistance, and social participation of Catholics in the shared reality of all Cubans.

At the same time, the address by Rodríguez revealed the nature of ENEC as a synthetization of history. Among the objectives of REC had been the reconstruction of the Church's own historical perspective, an emphasis on a Church "open to future without nostalgia for the past."<sup>295</sup> As a recovery process, ENEC voiced the first outlines of a cohesive, concise history of the Church in the revolution as constructed by the Church itself. It was pronounced a history of persistence and resistance, of maintaining faith, and of persevering despite the circumstances. As such, it was at times a heroic history that not all Catholics nor Cubans could relate to. Interpretations contradictory to the history of consensus were left aside; in this manner, the pronouncing of histories of the revolution became a selective, excluding process also within the Church.

For the Church, ENEC was also a historiographical reflection on its own past and the ways history was both constructed and omitted within the revolutionary process. In an attempt to create a cohesive historiography extending beyond the revolutionary period, the Church drew from Catholic foundations of ecclesiological knowledge and identity by highlighting an understanding of the dynamic nature of history in conjunction with the self-understanding of the Church: the Church, the People of God, in a continuous process of conversion. With this perspective, it would be possible also in Cuba to establish dialogue towards a better future, as the future and the search for a common good could form the ground on which mutual understanding, collaboration, and the "mutual correction" of past errors could be reached.<sup>296</sup>

The ENEC process went as far as to offer subtle remarks on how the past decades had contributed to the Church's growth:

Each moment of history has its own value and interpretation. One cannot ask from the past what only the present can give. - - Never in this life will you start with a blank page as if history would start from the beginning again. - - These 27 years have not passed in vain, and if we today reach wider horizons, we are partly indebted in that to those who preceded us.<sup>297</sup>

The experience of the revolution was inescapable: it remained a present factor in the structures of the Church and the daily lives of believers, as traumatic and transformative at the same time. The words also conveyed a spiritual meaning given to past experiences. Through spirituality, the Catholic community was constructing a past that made sense: the complex, often painful, daily experiences of the revolution were placed in a larger framework of religious, transcendent

295 Abierta al futuro y sin nostalgia del pasado. AHAH REC AD SANTIAGO DE CUBA Mensaje de la asamblea diocesana de Santiago de Cuba.

296 Corrección común. VC 1.12.1985 La Iglesia que queremos ser.

297 Cada momento histórico tiene su valor y su interpretación propia. No se puede pedir al pasado lo que únicamente el presente puede dar. - - Nunca se parte en esta vida de una página en blanco como si la historia empezara con uno. - - Estos 27 años no han pasado en vano y si hoy nos planteamos horizontes más amplios se lo debemos en parte a los que nos precedieron. COCC ENEC Instrucción pastoral de los obispos de Cuba con motivo de la promulgación del documento final del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano. Mayo 1986.

meaning-making of the past. Through this process of negotiation, Catholics attempted to connect episodes of the revolution with a meaningful, comprehensive understanding of identity. Central to this work of construction was the experience of unity and community. “We laughed and cried together,” was the manner in which one layman described the shared experience of trying to negotiate the course of the revolution: “And the unity of this Church is what has allowed us to be here to this day. The unity of the bishops, of the clergy, of the women in religious orders, of the laity.”<sup>298</sup> These words suggest both the strong collective emphasis on constructing unity and the meaningful experience of unity within the community.

Cuban ecclesial historiography was also constructed through Pope John Paul II, whom Cuban bishops petitioned to greet ENEC participants with either opening or closing remarks. When requesting the papal message, Cuban bishops briefed the Holy See with an extensive account of historiographical elements they wished the Pope to bring forth, and a similarly detailed list of future directions they asked him to emphasize. The dimensions included, for instance, recognition of the commitment and sacrifice of Cuban Catholics “for so many years with so few resources, by a group so deprived of priests,” and the *testimonio de la vida* offered by laypeople through perseverance and everyday commitment to the Church.<sup>299</sup>

Yet the ecclesial accounts of the past also formed a problematic history, through a selective process of reconstruction, appraisal, and interpretation. If the revolution was selective in its own historical narrative, so too was the Church; as much as the revolution chose what to include in its history and historiography, so did the Church. The core of the new historiographical understanding of the Church was made up of those who came to be portrayed as martyr-like conservers and preservers of the faith. As was criticized particularly by some in the laity, the history pronounced at ENEC marginalized particularly those who had given up, those who had not publicly practiced their faith by public manifestations. In this manner, the Church also contributed to portraying the nexus of the Church and the revolution as a state of juxtaposition and polarization. For some lay Catholics, it was not a history they could recognize as their own in the daily performance of the revolution.

In the course of ENEC, lay delegates had affirmed their adherence to episcopal authority and assured bishops of their obedience.<sup>300</sup> Correspondingly, the newly pronounced ecclesial historiography was also a call for obedience, for subscribing to a consensus on the past and its remembrance. Through the process of historical re-evaluation, ENEC resulted in the production of a new normativity based on the largest possible consensus on the official lines of theology and pastoral work.<sup>301</sup> As discussed by Padgett, among the decisive lines was the episcopate’s emphasis on the policy of accommodation, which underscored the Church’s spiritual domain while avoiding political and politicized, hence confrontational, stances.<sup>302</sup> Despite this policy aligning with the Holy See’s *Ostpolitik*, thus representing the magisterial authority of the Church in the Cuban reality, some of the participants felt that ENEC had compromised the very

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298 Interview 18.

299 COCC ENEC Sujerencias para una posible “carta” o “mensaje” del Santo Padre.

300 AHAH ENEC SESION 25 Palabras del Delegado Jorge Ignacio Domínguez en la sesión 25.

301 An indication of the consensus reached at ENEC is provided by the transcripts of votes on approving *Documento del Trabajo*, which formed the substantial core of the final document summarizing ENEC’s discourses. For instance, AHAH ENEC SESION 26 Informe del resultado de las votaciones del Documento del Trabajo propuesto al Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 22.2.1986.

302 Padgett 2008, 108.

foundations upon which it was built in its search for consensus and accord. In the public outcome of ENEC, participants felt they no longer heard the multitude of voices that emerged in the course of REC, which had contributed to a complex, multifaceted understanding of Catholic experiences in the revolution. Thus, for some ENEC was a reduction of the more dynamic process into a condensed, forced consensus.

Yet few of the disputes and disagreements emerged into public awareness. According to experiences of the interviewees, some of which were still pronounced with hesitation, ENEC built on a consensus over the importance of maintaining a unified front: of showing solidarity among even those Catholics with differing theological, pastoral, and socio-political visions. Among the shared visions of unity was the firm intention “to keep discrepancies from leaking out onto the streets,” one participant at ENEC recalled as being a shared ambition of the working group.<sup>303</sup> Through the contesting discourses and differing visions, a shared emphasis on the need to reach a consensus prevailed, and was made to prevail, by the majority in their search for a unifying voice for the Church.

At times, the search for consensus resulted in a heavily enforced narrative of unity: such was the case when Pope John Paul II was asked to both acknowledge and reinforce the unity in his address to the Cuban Church. Cuban bishops asked him to express “particular gratitude to God for the gift of unity, effective and affective in the Church in Cuba; a gift that must be cared for and cultivated so that it always improves and nothing can cause detriment to it.”<sup>304</sup> The attempt to obtain papal intermediation<sup>305</sup> in the construction of unity shows how, in the course of ENEC, discourse on the collectively accepted and rejected interpretations of Catholicism in the revolution were directed by and regulated from positions of authority.<sup>306</sup> The discourse also resonated with Pope John Paul II’s call for unity in the Latin American Church, torn by division with the Vatican over the theology of liberation and faced by the violent circumstances in which many of the local churches existed.<sup>307</sup>

From the outside, the Cuban ecclesial hierarchy had been criticized for emphasizing unity at the cost of diversity. The Catholic Church in Spain had remarked that the “internal balance that they try to maintain does not arise from divergent forces but a lack of dynamism,”<sup>308</sup> and it called upon the Cuban episcopate to allow for more diversity and contrasts in discourse in

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303 Que no salen a las calles las discrepancias. Interview 23. Another example of the consensus-based process was provided in Pinar del Río already during the diocesan assemblies in the summer of 1985: among the challenges of the process identified by the local groups was the election of “some delegates that are not trained to take part in ENEC (regarding loyalty to the votes made in the [diocesan] assembly.” In the same document, it was also noted that “the elections by votes do not reflect maturity.” AHAH REC AD PINAR DEL RIO Asamblea diocesana de la R.E.C. Juicio global.

304 Gratitud especial a Dios por el don de la unidad, efectiva y afectiva, de la Iglesia en Cuba; don que se debe cuidar y cultivar para que siempre se incremente y nada le cause detrimento. COCC ENEC Sujerencias para una posible “carta” o “mensaje” del Santo Padre.

305 In the message of Pope John Paul II to ENEC, the reference the Pope made to the Catholic experience in the revolution was a recognition of “the experience of grace, matured throughout the difficult years in prayer, in the sacrifice and selfless commitment to Christian life by numerous Cuban Catholics, the generous witnesses to the word of Christ and love of the Father.” Mensaje del Papa Juan Pablo II al Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 11.2.1986.

306 For instance, AHAH ENEC SESION 6 Historia de la evangelización y sus lecciones 18.2.1986; AHAH ENEC Sesión 25 Palabras pronunciadas por Mons. Jaime Ortega Alamino.

307 Tombs 2002, 248.

308 COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985.

order to facilitate progressive, eclectic exchange between Catholics without requiring uniformity. Also, commentators criticized the emphasis on institutional and hierarchical leadership at the cost of grassroots experiences, saying that the episcopal hierarchy was only seeking to reinforce their definition of unity. According to Spanish commentators, “unity is emphasized strongly - - the ecclesiology of the People of God is forgotten.”<sup>309</sup>

The search for unity contributed to constructing a history and an interpretation of the past that drew on collective experiences. Simultaneously, it reinforced the construction of a collective identity discussed through narratives of the past. The bishops maintained a unified front, emphasizing that based on an agreement reached at the Episcopal Conference, they would always act as a cohesive group in regard to official documents and matters such as Church–State relations.<sup>310</sup> This would naturally contribute to the construction of a uniform narrative pronounced with a voice of normativity.

At the same time, as was voiced in several interviews, the ideal of unity was fostered as an emotionally foundational, spiritually central dimension of ecclesial life and identity. For the laity, the sense of unity was a particular source of strength; for the clergy, unity was a vision of pastoral work as much as a personal commitment.<sup>311</sup> Unity provided a deeply meaningful perspective for making sense of the life and experiences of Catholics as a marginalized social cohort in the revolution, which had proven hard to depict from the outside. Thus, both experiences of the revolution and experiences of how the Cuban revolution and its encounter with religion was interpreted from the outside rendered predominance to the construction of unity within the Cuban Church.

The sense of sustaining unity was also a narrative upon which the Church was able make sense of its past in the revolution and move towards more dialogue with it. Despite the strong focus on analyzing and understanding past, the Church emphasized that the entire process of reflection had been orientated towards the future. Even though “ENEC was a singular moment of our Church,” the Church underscored that “life is not a moment. ENEC, as an event, already belongs to the past. But the Church lives in the present and looks to the future.”<sup>312</sup> In the historical process of Cuban Catholicism, ENEC represented both a means of continuity and a moment of change. In order to connect prerevolutionary Catholicism to what the Church aspired to become in revolutionary Cuba, spirituality was employed as a bridge both from history to the present and from the Church to the revolution. Through spirituality, reconciliation also assumed a dualistic, overlapping meaning: as much as the newly discovered discourse was an attempt at reconciliation by the Church to society at large, it was also an act of reconciliation within the Church. As a process of interpreting the history of the revolution, ENEC was a process of interpreting histories within the Church and from the Church to the revolution. Through

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309 Se acentúa mucho la unidad - - se olvida la eclesiología del Pueblo de Dios. COCC ENEC Observaciones al Documento de Trabajo del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano 10.12.1985.

310 COCC CP Prensa Latina / Jaime Ortega Alamino 26.12.1981; AHAH ENEC DS Holguín Aportes al Documento del Trabajo del ENEC.

311 For instance, Interview 18; Interview 19; Interview 26.

312 El ENEC fue un momento singular de nuestra Iglesia. Pero la vida no es un momento. El ENEC, como acontecimiento, pertenece ya al pasado. Pero la Iglesia vive el presente y mira el futuro. COCC ENEC Instrucción pastoral de los obispos de Cuba con motivo de la promulgación del documento final del Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano. Mayo 1986.

a reconstruction of the past, ENEC orientated Cuban Catholics towards the future. In this manner, ENEC became a defining moment of both change and continuity in the Church.

At the heart of connecting the Cuban Church's past to the contemporary situation was the foundational principle of the Church as an ahistorical presence. Corresponding to the transcendent presence of the Church as a sacred entity, the ideal of Cuban *patria* as an equally elusive, ever-present dream was brought forth through a spiritual dimension naturally connecting the two: *La Virgen de La Caridad del Cobre*. In a poem included in the public guidelines on how to make sense of ENEC and its meaning for the Catholic community on the island, *La Virgen* was asked to watch over the Cuban people and make visible a new opening for the Church in the Cuban *patria*. The courageous, provocative message of the poem suggested that the hearts of Cubans were already, or still, open to faith, as Catholicism continued to both stem from and be rooted in *la cubanidad* through the prevailing presence of the Virgin, which transcended ideology, identity, and man-made binaries.

The poem helped build a bridge from the past to the present and towards the future of the Church. Recognizing the experiences of suffering and frustration in the past, but also the recently witnessed shifts and horizons of change, the poem built on the ahistorical, transcendent presence of *La Virgen de La Caridad del Cobre* as the nation's mother. She was venerated by all Cubans because, in essence, she embodied Cuba in both its revolutionary and religious realities. Her maternal presence connected Cubans on the island and in diaspora. She belonged to the fatherland and the fatherland belonged to her: the revolutionary *patria* could only be built by her intercession in the daily life of all Cubans.

*Nuestra Señora de la Caridad - -  
Madre común:  
de los ayer,  
de los de hoy y  
de los de mañana,  
de los de acá  
de los de allá y de los de acullá,  
que haces de todos los cubanos un solo pueblo. - -  
Consuelo de nuestras horas de aflicción - -  
participe de nuestros gozos  
compañera de logros y frustraciones  
mientras el corazón de un cubano te venera  
sabemos que hay puertas abiertas  
para tu hijo Jesús y para su Iglesia  
en nuestra Patria.*

Our Lady of Charity - -  
Mother of everyone:  
those of yesterday,  
those of this day and  
those of tomorrow,  
of those over here and  
those over there,  
you make all Cubans into one nation. - -  
Consolation in our sorrows  
take part in our joys  
Companion in success and frustration  
As the heart of a Cuban venerates you,  
we know there are doors open  
for your son Jesus and his Church  
in our fatherland.<sup>313</sup>

Through the concluding verses, the histories of Catholics and Cubans became acknowledged in their complexity. By invoking a call to *La Virgen's* enduring participation in the lives of all Cubans, the messy and uneasy histories of not only Catholics, but also all Cubans, became accounted for and recognized. Cubans on the island and in diaspora, those within the Church and those outside of it, Cubans on the other side, be that the Heavenly Kingdom or Miami, were joined by a shared experience of the Virgin's presence and patronage. The poem further alluded to the changing meanings of *la cubanidad* from a Catholic perspective, and Catholic perspectives on what it meant to be Cuban both contrasted and aligned with revolutionary visions of

313 COCC ENEC Vida Cristiana: Algunos elementos para un discernimiento teológico que ayude a orientar la vida y la misión de la Iglesia en Cuba.



being Cuban. The inclusion of multiple layers of Cubanness in the Catholic interpretations resonated with the proposed<sup>314</sup> fluidity of Cuban national identity by reconciling the evolving interpretations of reality with the change of circumstances.

The Virgin also marked a point of public witness to the religious meaning-making of the revolution: an acknowledgement of the complexity of experiences and stories in the revolution, with the histories of Cuban Catholics woven into the grand course of the revolution. The Virgin was used as a tangible, historic symbol of the inextricability of Catholic experiences in the revolution as intrinsically Cuban histories of the revolution. A reference to her alluded to the fact that the meaning-making of both Catholicism and the revolution only occurred in a dialogical relationship: that the lives of Cubans found resonance and meaning in each other, and that those lives were not a uniform collection forming a cohesive history, but rather a compilation of messy, uneasy, intrinsically human stories contributing to the construction of what was understood as the revolutionary process.

Ultimately, the Church issued a call for the revolution to acknowledge human experience within and behind the machinery of the State and the ethos of the revolution. By establishing space for discourse, the Church proposed that, ultimately, the lives led by Cubans in their everyday realities formed the intersection between Catholicism and the revolution, and in those spaces of everyday experience both the revolution and religion were negotiated in manners beyond institutional hegemonies and top-down displays of power and authority. In those spaces, the Church claimed, resided the People of God; the small, ragged communities scattered around the island, at workplaces and in schools, in homes and in the streets, embedded in the daily realities of shared Cuban experiences, representing the Church through the lives of Catholics in the revolution.

## 6. Discussion

Central to the early 1980s were the multiplying realities and perspectives for Catholics on social participation. Experiences of the recent years began to contribute to a change in paradigm, re-orienting the Cuban Church in its presence and role in the revolutionary society. Voices from the ground, grassroots experiences, and the cumulative interpretations of daily life were voiced by clergy, religious orders and the laity. With these voices, the complexity and layered nature of Catholic histories in the revolution became acknowledged: *Reflexión Eclesial Cubana* amounted to a recognition of the often-contradictory experiences and visions of Catholics regarding both their own Church and the revolution. At the same time, the reflection process mirrored the Church's emerging aspiration to fully enter global Catholicism as an active agent and become integrated into Latin American post-conciliar theology.

Ultimately, the evolving discourse of the 1980s revealed that the layers and meanings of the revolution, as experienced and negotiated from within by Cuban Catholics, were more complex and messy than established categories of citizenry, identity, and participatory presence accounted for. Through the dimension of lived experience and meaning-making in the every-

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314 For a discussion on the evolution of Cuban national identity as a historiographical process, see Pérez 1999. See also Ching, Buckley & Lozano-Alonso 2007, 144.

day, these histories contributed to a bottom-up historiography of the revolution, ultimately challenging the more institutional frameworks for public remembrance, historicizing and conceptualizing the revolutionary process and its intertwining, overlapping experiences. Some of these experiences were voiced in the syncretization of ecclesial history presented through *Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano*.

As this chapter showed, the unfolding exchange of the institutional church with the revolutionary leadership and multiplying individual encounters of Catholics and communists in the everyday of the revolution further challenged the visions of the interaction of religion and the revolution as solely a series of confrontations and binaries. At the same time, the discourse suggests a more nuanced reading of revolutionary dynamics and exchange. Scholarship has emphasized narratives of conflict and confrontation emerging from the dramatic changes catalyzed by the revolutionary process. Despite the persistent nature of these narratives in histories of Cuban Catholicism, this chapter showed how other kinds of interpretations also emerged. Recurring accounts of reconciliation, rapprochement, and continuity shed light on new histories of social discourse and revolutionary dynamics on the island.

The documental and oral sources discussed in this chapter have offered new insights into deconstructing binaries and bridging the experiences of religion and the revolution. While the grand narrative of the revolution has mostly discussed revolutionary experiences through ideological battles, normative voices, and the interplay of authorities, Cuban Catholics discussed the revolution they knew through neighbors no longer greeting them in the morning; by feelings of unrest and fear; by internal turmoil over their Catholic identity. Yet at the same time, they also depicted the revolution through personal commitment to the fatherland and social contributions. Some agreed with and accepted the public discourse, while others opposed it. They framed definitions of *la cubanidad* and nationalism through a reference to Catholicism. A particular path of continuity may be recognized in the reinforced discourse on *patria* from a Catholic perspective and the self-identified participation and commitment of Catholics in constructing Cuban society.

As the perspectives building on lived religion propose, together with the evidence presented in this chapter on the exchange of religious and revolutionary experiences, narratives, and discourses, Cuban Catholic religiosity in the revolution not only influenced the revolutionary reality as “the heaven” of the revolutionary everyday but was also inextricably marked and defined by the revolutionary context. Cuban Catholic religiosity took place in the dense, multi-layered, complex sites, both physical and imaginary, of the revolution, such as workplaces, universities, and residential neighborhoods. The revolution irreversibly shaped religious thinking, emotions, and practices, and those human experiences came to mark an interpretation of the revolution via Catholic meaning-making of what it meant to be a Cuban in the revolutionary reality.

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In November 1986, a statue of the Virgin Mary reappeared in the city of Santa Clara. *La Virgen del Camino* was rediscovered in a ditch on the outskirts of the city by a worker driving his tractor. She was buried in the ground, covered in mud, and forsaken, having laid there for some 25 years. According to those who witnessed the day of her appearance, the ditch immediately became a spontaneous pilgrimage site as word quickly began to spread. Santa Clara's Catholics, those who had not forgotten the Virgin, started to gather at the site and lay flowers beside her. Her rediscovery was celebrated as a miracle.

Only hours later, the Virgin disappeared again as the government took possession of the statue. She was taken to a repair shop, and this time the silence lasted for a decade. In June 1995, when the Diocese of Santa Clara was established, the newly appointed bishop, Fernando Prego, asked to have the Virgin returned as his inaugural gift from the government. When the time came to bring back the Virgin, the Catholic community of Santa Clara demanded that she be left untouched and simply placed in the Cathedral in the original shape she had been in upon her rediscovery. Through the marks on her body, the community claimed, the Virgin should be allowed to tell her story every day; and through her history, the community would mirror, reminisce about, and discuss their own. Hence, today a statue of the Virgin stands at the entrance to the Cathedral. On her body, she continues to bear the history of her disappearance.

With respect to this research project, the history of Santa Clara's Virgin is a microcosm of living the Cuban revolution as Catholics. Through the presence of the Virgin in her broken form, the Catholic community in Santa Clara claimed ownership over the statue and its history, and, more importantly, ownership over what the history of the statue seemed to symbolize and how it was interpreted by the community itself. Missing pieces of her body, she stood as a visible sign of enduring presence. For many, her history was the Catholic history of living the revolution. She represented the community's perception of what it had been like to live as a Catholic in the revolution, and for some it is still a reality assumed in the intertwining identities of both *la cubanidad* and Catholicism. The history of Santa Clara's Virgin is a powerful embodiment of the Catholic experience of the revolution.

Excavating previously unexplored histories, the overarching argument of this dissertation is the continuous agency of the Catholic Church in the Cuban revolution both locally and globally. My research establishes the agency of the Church as multifaceted and multidimensional: it shows that throughout the revolution, the Catholic Church as an institution and Cuban Catholics as individuals have portrayed various forms of presence and exercised both agency and autonomy in the revolutionary process. At the same time, I argue, the layers of agency were inextricably woven into and stemmed from the myriad of experiences of life in the revolution as Catholics. Through a joint analysis of both the institutional and lived histories of Cuban Catholicism, my study discusses the multileveled dynamics of Catholicism and the revolution as mutual, bilateral exchange and interplay, as opposed to portraying the Church as an object of the revolutionary process, as has been previously done in the dominant paradigm of scholarly work. These new perspectives challenge the concept of silence as a construction in preceding scholarship and in the grand narrative of the Cuban revolution. The major conclusions are discussed in further detail below.

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First, my research clearly shows the continuity of ecclesial life and discourse in the revolution, thus both complementing and challenging predominant narratives and paradigms of scholarly work on Cuba. Preceding scholarship, having put a predominant focus on the institutional church, episcopal hierarchy, and clergy, has largely approached religion within the narrative framework of the revolution. While this has often resulted in portrayals of religion as an institutionalized, simplified, and marginal history of the revolution, my study presents a more complex discourse with the intersecting dynamics of religion embedded in the revolutionary process. Through an in-depth study of institutional and individual histories of Catholicism, established and grassroots accounts of Catholic experiences in the revolution, my work recovers previously unpronounced histories that ultimately point towards uninterrupted ecclesial agency embedded in the revolutionary reality.

In contrast to the majority of preceding scholarship, my research turns the lens towards the intrinsically Catholic histories of the revolution and counterbalances the prevalent paradigms on the revolution's dominance over ecclesial agency. In-depth analysis based on Catholic sources provides substantial evidence on the agency and autonomy of both the institutional church and Cuban Catholics, previously omitted from both revolutionary historiography and scholarship. By layered, complementing, and contrasting accounts of archival sources and oral histories, voices from within the Church place an emphasis on religious meaning-making in the revolution.

As such, this research also suggests a shift of paradigm in analyzing Catholic histories of the revolution by suggesting that it is not sufficient to examine religion in Cuba through the lenses and paradigms of the revolution. In order to recover histories of religion in the revolution, scholars must engage in critical study of the revolution through the interpretations and meaning-making processes of religious actors and agents. My work clearly shows the importance of the disciplinary perspectives of theology and religious studies for understanding the legacies of religion in the revolution and the still-unfolding, complex relations of the Catholic Church and the Cuban revolution. By my research, I argue that in order to discuss the histories of Catholicism in the revolution, one must examine the history of the Church not only as it is constructed by the revolution, but also how it has been, and continues to be, recounted by and from within the Church itself. In its theology and practice, discourse and activities, communities and individuals, the Church tells its own story of living the revolution as a Church, both in local and global contexts. As I propose, that is a history that both sets the Church distinctively apart from the revolution and weaves together the histories of the Church and the revolution in profound, intrinsic manners.

Second, this research provides new insight not only into the study of the Cuban revolution and Catholicism; it also points towards new perspectives and conclusions in studies of global and Latin American Catholicism. In histories of global Catholicism, Cuba represents an understudied, unacknowledged area. While this study proposes a repositioning of religion in the Cuban revolution, offering a perspective on the interconnectedness of the revolutionary process and Catholicism, it also addresses the absence and misrepresentation of Cuba in global histories of Catholicism. Despite the profound impact of global Catholic exchange and discourse in transforming Cuban Catholic thought and expression, the interplay is only now being mapped and analyzed in depth. Correspondingly, my study proposes a more complex

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interpretation of the interaction between global Catholicism and the Cuban context, while simultaneously rendering predominance to the intrinsically Cuban experience of Catholicism on the island.

Third, strongly connected with the preceding argument and building on the lack of scholarly knowledge about Cuban Catholicism, my study clearly shows the interconnectedness of global exchange to and from the Cuban Church. As numerous examples in this study show, the institutional church in Cuba remained embedded in global Catholicism throughout the revolution, despite the persistence of narratives of isolation and exclusion both on the island and in scholarly work. The experiences of the Cuban Church were discussed in the developments of the Catholic Church both in Europe and Latin America, and the case of Cuba was mirrored against the global backdrop. Importantly, while the Cold War and Latin American political movements formed the immediate framework for mirroring the Cuban revolution, my study shows how the historical process of Cuban Catholicism cannot be historicized with references to the domestic revolution only. The case of the Cuban Church reflects more universal histories of Catholicism and modernity, and it portrays the histories of global Catholicism in a local context. My study clearly shows that the joint analysis of these global and local actors also places Cuba at the center of complex dynamics of power, authority, and autonomy between the global and local in the Catholic Church.

Fourth, my study turns the lens towards the undeniable accounts of agency, autonomy, and authority of the Church in the revolution instead of reinforcing the revolutionary and scholarly narratives insisting on the silence of the institutional church. It also provides a multilayered account of voices: Catholics discussing the life of the Church in the revolution, complementing and contrasting with each other as much as the narratives established by the revolution. This study brings forth the multitude of Catholic actors and voices in the revolution: voices of the clergy, religious orders and laity, each contributing to the emerging vision of Catholicism in the revolution. Acknowledging the diversity and multiplicity of actors, a variety of voices, also makes visible the contesting visions within the Church, the internal discourse, dialogue, and contestation between groups with varying ecclesial roles. This study clearly states that Catholicism, the institutional church, and the experiences of Cuban Catholics form intertwining histories of the revolution, pertaining to the multitude of revolutionary experiences on the island not as isolated, but as profoundly intrinsic, histories of the revolution.

The discourse and dynamics of laity, clergy and religious orders within the Church serve as markers to a historiographical understanding of Catholicism in the revolution. Exploring the layers of religious meaning-making in the revolution, the discourses through which Catholic experiences have become embedded in histories of the revolution and the revolution has been interpreted from Catholic perspectives, provides new insight into analyzing the ways the revolution has been experienced from within. As histories of both institutional discourse and individual experiences of various intra-ecclesial groups, these stories—stored in both archives and memory—also track the actions of humans in terms of religious agency. Through concrete, religiously motivated actions, interpretations of transcendent realities became concrete acts shaping the stories that should also be recognized as histories of the revolution. Ultimately, these histories point towards further explorations into the intersecting, intrinsically intertwined realities of revolution and religion, the complexity of Cuban, Catholic, and revolutionary

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voices, and the recognition of religion being embedded within the revolution and the revolution within religion.

Fifth, this research marks a new contribution to analyzing both the lived experience of Cuban Catholics in the revolution and the everyday histories and individual stories of revolutionary Cuba. Oral history provides an insight into the emotional landscapes and experiences of religion embedded in the daily course of the revolutionary process. The individual stories of the Cuban clergy and laity open windows into the grassroots histories of Catholicism of both ecclesial and revolutionary life on the island. In this regard, my study recovers previously unacknowledged stories, rendering unprecedented scholarly attention to the everyday of Catholic experiences in the revolution. Thus, it also contributes to new theoretical frameworks for studying religion in the Cuban revolution and enriches the field of lived religion with a new context for study: revolutionary Cuba, Cuban religiosity, and the historical experiences of the Catholic Church and Cuban Catholics open up new geographical, cultural, historical, and religious contexts for the study of lived religion.

As my study shows, within theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing Catholicism in the revolution, the approach of lived religion serves as an insightful perspective. It enables the reconstruction of histories emphasizing the layers and intersections of Catholicism and the revolution, and it places a focus on the meaning-making processes and sense-making systems of Cuban Catholics in their attempts to navigate between the overlapping identities and spheres of life. Scholarly consciousness of lived experience allows for including humans into history. The Catholic experience of the revolution, as I argue, is a perspective enriching the field of Cuban studies through a more complex, multifaceted, dynamic perspective on the intersections of religion and the revolution. In Cuban studies, religion cannot be studied as a separate entity disaffiliated from the study of the revolution: in scholarly work, it must be approached as a dimension embedded within histories of the revolution through both more institutionalized dynamics of the revolutionary process as well as the complexity of human experience within the revolutionary reality.

Thus, my research provides a new framework for analyzing the intersections of Cuban Catholicism and the revolution, and most importantly, the interchangeable connections between the two. My study argues that at these junctions, Catholic laypeople are instrumental for understanding the dynamics and exchanges between religion and the revolution, and vice versa. Through lived religion, voices from the grassroots level, individual experiences, emotional landscapes, and meaning-making processes of daily realities are woven into more institutional perspectives. The voices in the archives and the voices of individuals on the island both portray voices from within the Church *and* the revolutionary reality.

Sixth, my work offers a new perspective on the study of the Cuban revolution through a focus on previously unstudied histories of Catholicism. By historicizing the experiences of Cuban Catholics, this study joins the emerging scholarly attention being given to new histories of the Cuban revolution as pronounced from within the revolutionary reality. It contributes both to new voices discussing the revolutionary experience and scholarly analysis of those voices by presenting Catholicism in the revolution as a more complex, multifaceted history than the interpretations of it suggested by preceding scholarly work. Ultimately, this study illustrates how the histories of Cuban Catholics are inextricably intertwined with, albeit unestablished,

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other histories of the Cuban revolution. As such, they belong to the unfolding social histories of the revolution, layers of experiences in revolutionary Cuba, and kaleidoscopic interpretations of what the revolution has meant in the course of Cuban lives. Consequently, histories of Cuban Catholicism suggest that the revolution should be examined through layered accounts of the changing meanings and interpretations of Cuban revolutionary experiences, weaving together the more institutional perspectives with histories of the revolutionary everyday.

These emerging histories of Catholicism and Cuban Catholics in the revolution inevitably address the elusive nature of the Cuban revolution and scholarly study of it. As more voices on the island have begun to disclose their histories of the revolution, and as the body of primary sources is becoming more robust and accessible, scholarly constructions of the revolution are being challenged and becoming more layered, nuanced, and, ultimately, complex in their multiple levels of discourse and dynamics. As the lacunas of scholarly knowledge on the revolution discussed in my work suggest, scholars of the revolution also face a repeating call to engage in critical (self-)reflection on the premises of knowledge, conceptualizations, and paradigms of the revolution's representations in academic discourse.

As a whole, my research excavates both institutional and individual histories of Catholicism previously unexplored in scholarly work. The production of new historical knowledge draws from the unprecedented opening of Cuban Catholic archives: the large quantity of Cuban primary sources allowed for scholarly use for the first time in my research breaks the silence of Catholic archives on the island. From the vast body of more than 40,000 pages of previously unstudied primary sources of the revolutionary era permitted for my use, a multilayered display of voices recounting Catholic histories of the revolution emerges. Voices of clergy, religious orders, seminarians, and laity, voices from within the Church and in the margins of ecclesial life emerge; the voices of men and women, children, youngsters, working-age adults, and the elderly all relay histories both individual and collective by nature. As such, they provide new perspectives on both Cuban Catholics discussing the revolution and Cubans living the revolution as a daily reality. They also open up new perspectives to the production of historical normativity through paradigmatic narratives within the Church, and the construction of collective identity drawing on a sense of historiographical unity as well as voices of contestation and contradiction, competing theological and pastoral visions; the voices highlight disagreements and disputes over the role of Catholicism in the revolutionary reality.

New archival sources place the autonomous agency of the Catholic Church at the heart of this study. They shed light on the internal discourse, Catholic historiography, and meaning-making of the course of the revolution from a simultaneously distinctive Cuban and Catholic perspective, interchangeably from within the Church and the revolution. As such, this study challenges the historical dominance of voices from the exile narrating the Catholic experience of the revolution: instead of histories of the immigration and transition of authentic Catholicism into exile as a counterforce to the revolution, sources on the island recover histories of Catholicism embedded in the daily process and performance of the revolution, within and inextricably intertwined with the revolutionary reality. Thus, the unprecedented opening of the archives and previously unpronounced oral histories also call attention to the importance of acknowledging and emphasizing Cuban sources on the island in narrating histories of the revolution through perspectives from within.

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The archives opened up for this research project serve as a significant step in providing for scholarly analysis of the Catholic experience, as do the previously unexplored individual histories of Cuban Catholics relayed in interviews. Through a joint examination, these sources open up new perspectives into the complexity of experiences and memories woven and rewoven into identities and histories, ultimately contributing to the idea of the revolution as a shared Cuban experience that does not equate with uniform, monolithic definitions of the revolutionary experience, but instead with the recognition of multilayered, kaleidoscopic narratives. In addition, the research process of delving into classified archives and undisclosed oral histories proposes new methodological considerations and contributes to a scholarly understanding of the nature of the Cuban archives as repositories of revolutionary memory and memories of the revolution. The attention given to archival policies and processes casts light on archives as political and politicized sites of construction of the past in the revolution. With an ethnographic sensitivity, the research process leading to the opening of the archives merits further discussion and points towards new steps in studying Cuban history with Cuban primary sources.

With a novel contribution to the fields of religious studies and Cuban studies, my research proposes several areas and perspectives for further study of religion in Cuba. With the hopeful prospective of more exposure of sources, both written and oral, on the island, my research points towards deepening and diversifying perspectives and approaches to including the study of religion in the study of the revolution. Consequently, as this study also shows, emerging histories from within the revolutionary reality are both connected with the revolution's grand narrative and diverge from it. This poses a fascinating historiographical challenge by requiring both a consciousness of the overarching course of the revolutionary process and a deepening of the scholarly focus on the histories of the individuals, communities, and social groups embedded within the revolution. The emerging question is, thus, how to link the layers of experiences and contrasting social histories to each other, connecting the multiple narratives and accounts of social experiences to each other in the context of living the revolution. My work serves as an opening for further acknowledgment and study of the interplay and exchange between a certain social group and the revolution.

As my work strongly proposes, new histories of the revolution challenge the prevailing discourses in both scholarly work and in the revolution, which in Cuba is understood as a continuing process. Consequently, they issue a call for in-depth analysis of the narratives, histories, and historiographical paradigms constituting the revolution both in scholarly work and on the island as a reconstruction of State politics, national self-understanding, and lived experience. From these perspectives, further questions emerge. If the revolution is approached from the vision of multilayered, simultaneously existing narratives and experiences, how are the histories connected to each other, and how does the interconnected nature of narratives, meanings, and experiences in the revolution contribute to a broader historical and historiographical knowledge of Cuba and the revolution?

By historicizing the experiences of Cuban Catholics and the discourse of the institutional church in the revolution, my research also points towards the elusive, complex, and crucial remarks on the role of memory and meaning-making in historical knowledge. The ethnographic dimension to this work clearly illustrates the manners in which meanings continue to be made and histories constructed on the island. Cuban Catholics continuously engage in processing the



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legacy of living the revolution. These emerging interpretations also point to the ways in which the Church has constructed a history of its own, negotiating its past within the revolution. Reflection on the past, and the presence of the past, contributes to structures and frameworks for recollection and remembrance within the Catholic Church as it continues to respond to the historiography constructed within the revolution's grand narrative. As such, this study points to further analysis of the boundaries of established historiographical knowledge, accepted forms of recollection and reminiscence, and accounts of the past both within the revolutionary reality and ecclesial communities in Cuba.

Ultimately, by offering a new view into the past, my research relates to the present and provides knowledge and frameworks for processing it. Within Catholic communities on the island, the revolutionary past is a present reality. For the generations of Catholics who have lived in the changing religious and revolutionary landscapes, the past is still work under construction. This renders a deeply meaningful explanation to the repeating patterns of religious expression and practices referencing the past as a continuous experience, the transformative presence of yesterday in the everyday. The persistent effort to remember and make sense of the past is perhaps best embodied in Santa Clara, where the Catholic community continues to lay flowers at the base of the broken, battered statue of *La Virgen del Camino*, pressing kisses from their lips, through their fingertips, onto the Virgin's feet.

## VIII RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL

La tesis doctoral *Never a Church of Silence: The Catholic Church in Revolutionary Cuba, 1959–1986* explora la historia del catolicismo dentro la Revolución cubana, construyendo un análisis del discurso interno y desarrollo teológico de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba durante la revolución así como de la experiencia de los católicos cubanos en cuanto a su vida como creyentes en la sociedad revolucionaria. Las fuentes de la tesis constarán de documentos históricos realizados por la Iglesia Católica en Cuba y testimonios orales de católicos cubanos, suponiendo ambos la apertura del acceso a las fuentes primarias para los estudios internacionales sobre Cuba.

El punto central de la tesis es una cuestión por lo común ausente en el campo de estudios internacionales sobre Cuba: la religión como área escasamente analizada en la historia de la Revolución. Al mismo tiempo, igual trascendencia en este estudio es el hecho de que Cuba permanezca como una región poco conocida dentro del catolicismo e incluida en el campo global de reconocimiento y estudios sobre catolicismo. Las lagunas de conocimiento existentes en los estudios previos son el resultado, por un lado, de la carencia de documentos históricos abiertos al público académico en los archivos de la Iglesia Católica y archivos estatales en Cuba y, por otro lado, la falta de estudios con un enfoque en la voluntad religiosa en la revolución en lugar de la predominancia dada al estudio de la Revolución, sus estructuras y los procesos vinculados a la religión.

En los estudios sobre Cuba y el catolicismo global, la mayoría de estudios académicos previos se han centrado en temas relacionados con el catolicismo cubano desde perspectivas institucionales. Como consecuencia de esta realidad, existe una laguna de conocimiento sobre la vida religiosa de los católicos cubanos dentro del proceso revolucionario y su manifestación en las relaciones sociales, expresiones y marcos de participación en la sociedad cubana. La mayoría de los estudios previos sobre la Iglesia Católica en Cuba se centran en su liderazgo y en distintas expresiones institucionales, en contraposición con la Revolución, analizando las relaciones de la Iglesia y el Estado desde perspectivas binarias de confrontación y polarización. Por esta razón, la mayoría de los estudios previos se han concentrado en las relaciones conflictivas de la Iglesia y la Revolución en la década de 1960. Como consecuencia de la falta de atención concedida a las siguientes décadas y al desarrollo histórico de la Iglesia cubana, dichos estudios han contribuido a la construcción del silencio eclesial en la isla en el curso de la Revolución, desde los albores de la misma, y a la marginalización de la religión en la sociedad socialista.

El propósito de esta tesis es rescatar y reconstruir parte de la historia de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba y de los católicos cubanos durante de la Revolución. El presente estudio trata de conectar la historia de la institución, la Iglesia Católica en Cuba, con las experiencias de individuos católicos en Cuba y ofrecer un análisis sobre los procesos de interacción entre la religión y la revolución según las fuentes católicas. Para realizar su análisis, la presente tesis trata tanto a la Iglesia Católica de Cuba como a los católicos cubanos experimentando y viviendo la Revolución de una manera propia, como sujetos activos, en vez de situar a la Iglesia en las ramas del proceso revolucionario como objeto sin autonomía o autoridad. En la tesis, el uso de la metodología de teología y estudio de religión, previamente poco utilizado, permite

poner la atención a en la acción religiosa y los procesos discursivos desde la perspectiva de la Iglesia en la Revolución. Este procedimiento hace posible identificar y analizar nuevas historias del catolicismo cubano.

En el fondo de la reconstrucción de la nueva historia del catolicismo en la Revolución está la apertura de los archivos de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba. En este trabajo, más de 40 000 páginas de documentos históricos, producidos en la isla después del año 1959, aparecen en el uso de estudio académico por la primera vez. En el curso del proceso investigativo, entre los años 2014 y 2017, los documentos fueron recopilados de los siguientes archivos católicos: 1) Archivo de la Conferencia de los Obispos Católicos de Cuba, 2) Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de La Habana, 3) Archivo de la Cancillería del Obispado de Pinar del Río, 4) Archivo del Obispado de Holguín, 5) Archivo del Seminario San Carlos y San Ambrosio, 6) Archivo Personal de Mariposa de la Cruz (seudónimo), 7) Archivo Personal de Juan Varela (seudónimo), y 8) Archivo Personal de Padre José Félix Pérez Riera.

Además, una colección de documentos fue recopilada del Archivo Central del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Cuba (MINREX). En la Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba José Martí, la autora del presente estudio consultó la colección de periódicos cubanos y unas copias singulares de publicaciones católicas. Asimismo, la autora utilizó también copias del periódico católico *Vida Cristiana*, publicadas entre el año 1962 y el año 1986. Generalmente, las fuentes documentales estaban ubicadas en diversos lugares en la isla, desde ciudades hasta pueblos; tanto en instituciones públicas como colecciones privadas. Debido a la gran cantidad y diversidad de las fuentes históricas incluidas en la presente tesis, la perspectiva geográfica permite la inclusión de lugares normalmente excluidos de los estudios académicos, muchas veces caracterizados por la dominación de La Habana como capital y centro tanto del discurso y actividad revolucionarios así como del ámbito religioso.

Además de las fuentes documentales, la tesis utiliza testimonios orales narrados por católicos cubanos. En la isla, la autora ha conducido 31 entrevistas con católicos cubanos. En las entrevistas, católicos de varias posiciones en la Iglesia, de varias épocas en los marcos temporales definidos por la tesis, y con multitud de experiencias y opiniones cuentan sus historias y experiencias como católicos dentro de la realidad revolucionaria. Los testimonios orales complementan y, a veces, contradicen las fuentes documentales, abriendo nuevas perspectivas al discurso interno de la Iglesia cubana y los grupos católicos dentro de la Iglesia. Al mismo tiempo, las entrevistas iluminan los aspectos interpretativos sobre el papel de la memoria y los recuerdos en la construcción de historias e interpretaciones históricas por individuos y comunidades católicos.

La inclusión de las nuevas fuentes marca un paso importante en el estudio del catolicismo a nivel global así como en los estudios internacionales sobre la Revolución cubana. Los estudios previos han tenido que conformarse con fuentes secundarias, publicaciones diversas y periódicos cubanos, así como presentar atención a las voces de la autoridad dentro de la Iglesia cubana, a riesgo de omitir la gran diversidad de voces católicas y su complejidad. Las nuevas fuentes primarias permiten, sin embargo, rescatar la multiplicidad de las voces: no solo las voces católicas, sino también las voces cubanas desde adentro de la Revolución.

El valor único de las nuevas fuentes es la diversidad de las voces católicas desde la realidad revolucionaria que contienen los documentos producidos por actores nacionales y

locales de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba. En los documentos resuenan las voces de los miembros de la jerarquía eclesiástica, sacerdotes, religiosos y laicos presentando sus experiencias e interpretaciones sobre la vida de la Iglesia y su teología en la Revolución. Además, las fuentes producidas por la Iglesia y los católicos en Cuba dan prioridad a las voces católicas en la isla frente a las voces de fuera; por ejemplo, la diáspora cubana en otros países, con una experiencia también bien vinculada con el catolicismo, muchas veces, sin embargo distinta en su naturaleza.

Las conclusiones de la tesis se centran en la continuada acción de la Iglesia tanto en la isla como a nivel global. Las nuevas fuentes permiten una nueva reconstrucción de una historia más compleja y multifacética del catolicismo en la época de la Revolución, de lo que ha sido reconocida y discutida anteriormente. A lo largo de todo el trabajo, la presente tesis destaca a la Iglesia Católica en Cuba como un actor autónomo, con autoridad y capacidad de acción propias en la realidad revolucionaria. De esta manera, en el punto central de la tesis y sus conclusiones se encuentran la Iglesia Católica y los católicos cubanos como sujetos activos en el curso de la Revolución.

Como muestra la presente tesis, la actuación de la Iglesia tomaba forma a través de los católicos cubanos en su multitud de pensamientos y expresiones, desde tendencias de resistencia al proceso revolucionario hasta la integración en la sociedad revolucionaria como católicos, el pensamiento católico cubano se desarrollaba no solo en el ámbito de la revolución sino también en el ámbito del catolicismo global. Entre los sacerdotes, religiosos y laicos cubanos, la acción de la Iglesia estaba vinculada a una multiplicidad de opiniones y argumentos teológicos y sociopolíticos, influidos por la enseñanza de la doctrina social de la Iglesia Católica de la época desde varias orientaciones y tradiciones.

Con la gran cantidad de documentos históricos, la presente tesis coloca el discurso interno de la Iglesia cubana en el campo del catolicismo global de su época: las dinámicas de intercambio y discurso dentro de la Iglesia global y de la Iglesia hacia la sociedad. La tesis ofrece un nuevo análisis de la dinámica del catolicismo global desde la década 1960, especialmente con relación al carácter renovador del Concilio Vaticano II y sus interpretaciones latinoamericanas, desde la perspectiva cubana. Además, la tesis incluye en su enfoque el papel y la influencia de la Santa Sede en la isla como mediador en las relaciones de la Iglesia y el Estado. De esta manera, la tesis trata la presencia y ausencia del catolicismo cubano en la Iglesia global así como las representaciones globales y transnacionales del catolicismo en la isla.

El caso del catolicismo cubano, propone la tesis, abre una ventana para examinar el intercambio entre Europa y América Latina en el discurso teológico y eclesiológico postconciliar en el catolicismo global. La tesis ofrece nuevas perspectivas al modo en que el proceso histórico del catolicismo en el plano global se ha manifestado en el contexto cubano, muchas veces con respeto a la Revolución y las relaciones entre la Iglesia y el Estado en la isla. De esta manera, la tesis destaca la naturaleza interconectada de la historia de la Iglesia cubana con la historia del catolicismo global y, al mismo tiempo, la particularidad de la historia cubana.

Por consiguiente, la tesis explora de una nueva manera la historia del catolicismo en la Revolución y la interacción intrínseca entre la religión y la Revolución cubana en las experiencias de los católicos cubanos. La tesis establece que dentro de la Iglesia cubana existió una variedad de opiniones e interpretaciones sobre el proceso revolucionario y el papel de la Iglesia en el discurso y praxis de la Revolución. Analizando distintos conceptos y experiencias

católicos, como “Pueblo de Dios”, “testimonio” y “comunidad” en el contexto católico cubano, la tesis propone nuevas maneras para conceptualizar las experiencias católicas en el contexto revolucionario. Como dimensiones previamente poco conocidas en los estudios sobre Cuba y el catolicismo cubano, la tesis destaca y analiza el discurso interno de la Iglesia cubana sobre la Revolución y, en adición, el desarrollo teológico y eclesiológico de la Iglesia Católica cubana.

En relación a los nuevos conceptos metodológicos para analizar la presencia e influencia de la religión en la Revolución, la presente tesis brinda un nuevo enfoque al tomar en consideración la experiencia vivida por los católicos dentro de la realidad revolucionaria. En la metodología de la tesis, un aspecto instrumental es la categoría de análisis llamada “la religión vivida”, que subraya el significado de la historia de los católicos cubanos en su religiosidad experimentado y vivido en contextos de vida humana en los espacios discursivos y concretos a que pertenecen y, al mismo tiempo, en los contextos de la religión y la Revolución.

Al campo de la religión vivida en la realidad revolucionaria pertenecen, por ejemplo, la historia de la transmisión de tradiciones religiosas entre generaciones de cubanos durante la Revolución; las maneras de expresar la identidad católica en el ambiente social que no incluía elementos visiblemente religiosos en la década de 1960; la espiritualidad de individuos y comunidades católicas en la isla; un sentido religioso en el fondo del pensamiento y el panorama emocional de los católicos tanto en la realidad social como con lo que respecta a las relaciones sociales. Un área distinta, como establece la tesis, es el discurso compartido por la Iglesia Católica y la Revolución sobre el significado y el valor del trabajo, y los espacios de encuentro surgidos del trabajo como una tarea compartida especialmente en la década de 1970.

El enfoque en la religión vivida es posible gracias a un análisis del pensamiento religioso en el contexto revolucionario: a través de las experiencias y manifestaciones católicas en el contexto de la religión vivida y practicada dentro de la realidad revolucionaria, es posible analizar las maneras diferentes en que los católicos han tratado de arreglar, entender e interpretar sus vidas en la Revolución desde perspectivas religiosas. El enfoque también presta atención a la acción e influencia de laicos católicos cubanos, un grupo social previamente poco reconocido como grupo distinto por su ubicación en la intersección de la religión y la Revolución.

Mientras los estudios académicos previos han subrayado la pasividad de la Iglesia como una institución silenciosa en la sociedad revolucionaria, esta tesis presenta un nuevo modo de conceptualizar la acción y la presencia del catolicismo en la realidad revolucionaria. Mediante el análisis de los procesos internos de la Iglesia cubana con fuentes producidas por la Iglesia, como las reflexiones sobre las condiciones de la vida eclesial en la isla, los estudios teológicos de los seminaristas, y los encuentros oficiales a nivel nacional, la tesis establece, por un lado, el desarrollo de la teología y auto-identificación de la Iglesia. Por otro lado, en la reconstrucción de la historia eclesiástica, de alta importancia es también el análisis de las manifestaciones sociales de católicos cubanos dentro de la Revolución tanto con tendencias de integración así como las de resistencia a la misma. Estas manifestaciones ponen el foco en la actuación de los individuos y comunidades católicas, en lugar de centrarse en una institución homogénea y monolítica.

## VIII RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL

De esta manera, a lo largo de toda la presente tesis analiza las conexiones y discursos del intercambio entre el catolicismo y la revolución, los puntos de encuentro y dialogo así como de confrontación y yuxtaposición, construyendo nuevas categorías para conceptualizar la presencia y acción religiosa en la Revolución. Las fuentes históricas y perspectivas metodológicas abren ventanas para explorar la multitud de maneras en que los católicos cubanos han negociado su orientación religiosa y la Revolución, viviendo dentro de la realidad revolucionaria como creyentes cubanos. De este intercambio, argumenta la tesis, surge la interconexión de las historias del catolicismo y la revolución, hasta ahora poco conocido y explorado.

Analizando el intercambio entre el catolicismo y la Revolución, y la influencia del uno en la otra, la tesis argumenta que a pesar de los discursos y marcos revolucionarios negando la presencia de la religión en el espacio público de la sociedad cubana, varias formas de expresión y prácticas católicas estaban presentes en la misma, particularmente en el ámbito privado así como en la interacción entre cubanos a nivel cotidiano. En las casas, en las calles y en los centros de trabajo, la presencia y la participación de los católicos contribuía a la permanencia de la religión en el contexto revolucionario ya con más frecuencia en la década de 1980. De esta manera, las historias individuales y colectivas de los católicos cubanos ofrecen una ventana a las experiencias cotidianas en los espacios interrelacionados del catolicismo y la realidad revolucionaria para individuos y comunidades católicas. Por consiguiente, las historias del catolicismo en la realidad revolucionaria exploran las experiencias vividas por los cubanos en el curso cotidiano de la realización de la Revolución.

La tesis presenta una nueva perspectiva para conceptualizar y analizar la historia de la Revolución cubana y la del catolicismo en Cuba, América Latina y a nivel global y transnacional. Más importante aún, las conclusiones de la obra destacan la complejidad de las manifestaciones católicas en la revolución, no solo como historias cubanas sino globales por la inclusión de varios actores, voces, motivaciones y discursos. Sin embargo, las manifestaciones y experiencias católicas en la isla pertenecen al mismo tiempo a la historia de la Revolución debido a su carácter intrínsecamente local. Aunque estudios previos las han analizado como categorías separadas, esta obra muestra que la historia de la religión no existe de manera aislada con respecto a la historia de la Revolución, sino que se entrelazan por medio de las experiencias de la Revolución, constituyendo una parte de la historia de la isla.

La tesis argumenta que la historia del catolicismo en la Revolución es, de una manera inseparable y consustancial, está formada por experiencias vividas, dentro de la realidad revolucionaria, por diferentes grupos sociales, en espacios interconectados por la vida cotidiana, las relaciones sociales y el encuentro humano. Por consiguiente, de la naturaleza interconectada de las distintas historias surge la motivación de analizar la multitud de experiencias, no como representaciones desconectas entre sí, sino a través de conceptos de continuidad y relaciones dialécticas: en la historiografía de la Revolución, en sus instituciones y realidades vividas, conectando las interpretaciones y narraciones, así como en los estudios académicos que tratan de construir un análisis sobre la diversidad de componentes que, en última instancia, pertenecen a las dimensiones de las experiencias conocidas como “la Revolución”.

## VIII RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL

Esta tesis doctoral representa una nueva apertura a la historia de la religión en la Revolución. La obra brinda una contribución original en los campos de estudios sobre Cuba y América Latina, el catolicismo global y la historia de la Iglesia Católica. La obra investigativa está situada en la intersección de los estudios de teología y religión, junto con el estudio de la historia, los estudios sobre Cuba, el Caribe y América Latina, la historia oral y la religión vivida. Para cada uno de estos campos, la tesis ofrece nuevas perspectivas y conceptualizaciones, desde sus fuentes únicas hasta las nuevas categorías de análisis. A la larga, la orientación multidisciplinaria de la tesis destaca la potencia de la religión como una dimensión intersectorial en la historia de la Revolución cubana.

## IX SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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#### 1.1. Archival sources

##### Archive of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops in Cuba

##### *Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba*

<i>Adveniat</i>	COCC
<i>Ayuda a Estudiantes Cubanos y Visita del Canonigo Fernando Boulard</i>	AD
<i>Cartas pastorales</i>	AY
<i>Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano</i>	CP
<i>Iglesia en Cuba</i>	ENEC
<i>Visita de Casaroli</i>	IEC
	CASAROLI

##### Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Havana

##### *Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de La Habana*

<i>Acción Católica</i>	AHAH
<i>Asamblea Nacional</i>	AC
<i>Caballeros Católicos de La Habana</i>	AN
<i>Consejo Nacional</i>	CCLH
<i>Mujeres</i>	CN
<i>Junta Diocesana de Cienfuegos</i>	M
<i>Junta Diocesana de La Habana</i>	JD C
<i>Comisión Diocesana</i>	JD LH
<i>Junta Diocesana de Matanzas</i>	CD
<i>Junta Diocesana de Pinar del Río</i>	JD M
<i>Junta Femenina</i>	JD PDR
<i>Junta Nacional de la Acción Católica Cubana</i>	JFF
<i>Centro de Económico-Social</i>	JN
<i>Centro de Orientación Cinematográfica</i>	CES
<i>Centro de Orientación Familiar</i>	COC
<i>Centro de Orientación Litúrgica</i>	COF
<i>Mujeres</i>	COL
<i>Juventud Femenina</i>	M
<i>Comisión Diocesana de Aspirantes</i>	JF
<i>Ramas juveniles</i>	CDA
<i>Congreso Católico Nacional</i>	RJ
<i>Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano</i>	CCN
<i>Intercambio de los delegados con los invitados</i>	ENEC
<i>Visita al cenotafio del P. Varela en la universidad,</i>	INTER
<i>velada cultural en el seminario</i>	VISITA
<i>Sesión 1, Apertura</i>	SESION 1
<i>Sesión 6, Historia de la evangelización y sus lecciones</i>	
<i>(debate)</i>	SESION 6
<i>Sesión 8, Situación de la Iglesia en Cuba</i>	SESION 8
<i>Sesión 23, Grandes opciones, debate</i>	SESION 23
<i>Sesión 24, Votación Final</i>	SESION 24
<i>Sesión 25, Sesión abierta</i>	SESION 25
<i>Sesión 26, Clausura oficial</i>	SESION 26
<i>Santa Clara</i>	SANTA CLARA
<i>Reflexión Eclesiástica Cubana</i>	REC
<i>Asamblea Diocesana</i>	AD
<i>La Habana</i>	LA HABANA
<i>Matanzas</i>	MATANZAS
<i>Pinar del Río</i>	PINAR DEL RIO
<i>Santiago de Cuba</i>	SANTIAGO DE CUBA



## IX SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

<i>Opiniones</i>	OP
<i>Camagüey</i>	CAMAGÜEY
<i>Matanzas</i>	MATANZAS
<i>Pinar del Río</i>	PINAR DEL RIO
<i>Santa Clara</i>	STA. CLARA
<i>Santiago de Cuba</i>	SANTIAGO DE CUBA
<b>Archive of the Chancery of the Diocese of Pinar del Río</b>	
<i>Archivo de la Cancillería del Obispado de Pinar del Río</i>	<b>ACOPR</b>
<i>Caso discriminatorio a Francisco Figueroa Lombillo en Bahía Honda</i>	CDFFL
<i>Estadísticos</i>	EST
<b>Archive of the Diocese of Holguín</b>	
<i>Archivo del Obispado de Holguín</i>	<b>AOH</b>
<i>Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano</i>	ENEC
<i>Reflexión Eclesial Cubana</i>	REC
<b>Archive of the Seminary <i>San Carlos y San Ambrosio</i></b>	
<i>Archivo del Seminario San Carlos y San Ambrosio</i>	<b>SSCSA</b>
<i>Catequesis</i>	CQ
<i>Filosofía Moral</i>	FM
<i>Libro de Matriculos</i>	LM
<i>Teología de la Liberación</i>	TL
<b>Central Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba</b>	
<i>Archivo Central del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de La República de Cuba</i>	<b>ACMINREX</b>
<i>Santa Sede</i>	SS
<b>José Martí National Library of Cuba</b>	
<i>Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba José Martí</i>	<b>BNJM</b>
<i>Congreso Católico</i>	CONGRESO CATOLICO
<b>Private Archive of Father José Félix Pérez Riera</b>	
<i>Archivo Personal de Padre José Félix Pérez Riera</i>	<b>APJFPR</b>
<i>Teología y pastoral de la reconciliación. P. René David</i>	TPR
<b>Private Archive of Mariposa de la Cruz (pseudonym)</b>	
<i>Archivo Personal de Mariposa de la Cruz (seudónimo)</i>	<b>APMC</b>
<i>Reflexión Eclesial Cubana</i>	REC
<b>Private Archive of Juan Varela (pseudonym)</b>	
<i>Archivo Personal de Juan Varela (seudónimo)</i>	<b>APJV</b>

## IX SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 1.2. Interviews

<b>Numeric reference in text</b>	<b>Ecclesial status</b>	<b>Age group / generation</b>	<b>Decade of ecclesial activity relevant to study</b>	<b>Gender</b>
1	Clergy	Pre-revolutionary generation	1960–1980	Man
2	Clergy	Pre-revolutionary generation	1960–1980	Man
3	Clergy	Pre-revolutionary generation	1960–1980	Man
4	Clergy	Pre-revolutionary generation	1950–1980	Man
5	Clergy	First revolutionary generation	1970–1980	Man
6	Clergy	First revolutionary generation	1970–1980	Man
7	Clergy	Pre-revolutionary generation	1960–1980	Man
8	Clergy	Pre-revolutionary generation	1970–1980	Man
9	Laity	First revolutionary generation	1970–1980	Man
10	Laity	First revolutionary generation	1960–1980	Woman
11	Laity	Pre-revolutionary generation	1950–1980	Woman
12	Laity	First revolutionary generation	1960–1980	Woman
13	Religious	First revolutionary generation	1980	Woman
14	Religious	First revolutionary generation	1970–1980	Woman
15	Religious	Pre-revolutionary generation	1950–1980	Woman
16	Laity	Pre-revolutionary generation	1960–1980	Man
17	Laity	First revolutionary generation	1970–1980	Woman
18	Laity	First revolutionary generation	1960–1980	Man
19	Laity	First revolutionary generation	1970–1980	Woman
20	Laity	Pre-revolutionary generation	1950–1980	Man
21	Laity	First revolutionary generation	1980	Man
22	Laity	Pre-revolutionary generation	1950–1980	Man
23	Clergy	First revolutionary generation	1970–1980	Man
24	Clergy	First revolutionary generation	1970–1980	Man
25	Laity	Pre-revolutionary generation	1960–1980	Man
26	Laity	First revolutionary generation	1970–1980	Woman
27	Laity	Pre-revolutionary generation	1950–1980	Woman
28	Laity	Pre-revolutionary generation	1950–1980	Man
29	Clergy	First revolutionary generation	1980	Man
30	Laity	First revolutionary generation	1970–1980	Woman
31	Clergy	Second revolutionary generation	1980	Man

#### **Ecclesial status**

Clergy: 12  
 Laity: 16  
 In a religious order: 3

#### **Gender**

Men: 20  
 Women: 11

## IX SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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                         Enrique, Santiago de Cuba  
                         Alberto, Matanzas  
                         Evelio, Pinar del Río  
                         Carlos, Camagüey  
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## X APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Chronology of the Bishops of the Catholic Church in Cuba, 1959–1986

Name	Diocese	Term
Enrique Pérez Serantes	Santiago de Cuba	1948–1968
Eduardo Martínez Dalmau	Cienfuegos	1935–1961
Alberto Martín Villaverde	Matanzas	1939–1960
Evelio Díaz Cía	Havana	1963–1970
Manuel Cardenal Arteaga Betancourt	Havana	1941–1963
Alfredo Muller San Martín	Cienfuegos	1961–1971
Carlos Riú Angles	Camagüey	1948–1964
Manuel Rodríguez Rosas	Pinar del Río	1960–1978
Eduardo Boza Masvidal,	Havana, aux.	1960–1961
José M. Domínguez Rodríguez	Havana, aux.	1960–1961
	Matanzas	1961–1986
Adolfo Rodríguez Herrera	Camagüey, aux.	1963
	Camagüey	1964–2002
Fernando Azcárate, S.J.	Havana, aux.	1964–1970
Alfredo Llaguno Canals	Havana, aux.	1964–1970
Pedro Meurice Estiú	Santiago de Cuba, aux.	1967
	Santiago de Cuba	1970–2007
Francisco Oves Hernández	Camagüey, aux.	1969
	Havana	1970–1981

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Hector Peña Gómez	Santiago de Cuba, aux. Holguín	1970 1979–2005
Evelio Ramos Díaz	Havana, aux.	1970–1976
Fernando Prego Casals	Cienfuegos, aux. Cienfuegos–Santa Clara	1970 1971–1999
Jaime Ortega Alamino	Pinar del Río Havana	1978–1981 1981–2016
José Siro González Bacallao	Pinar del Río	1982–2006

## Appendix 2: Selected Archival Sites

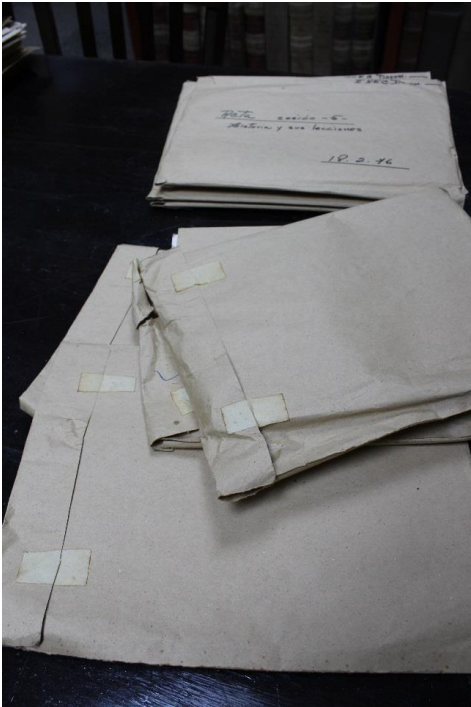


**Pictures 1 and 2**

Documents of Catholic Action, 1960–1961

Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Havana

*Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de La Habana*



**Picture 3**

Documents of ENEC, 1986

Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Havana

*Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de La Habana*

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### Pictures 4 and 5

The archive of the national Catholic seminary, *Seminario San Carlos y San Ambrosio*

On the left, the academic records of the seminarians.

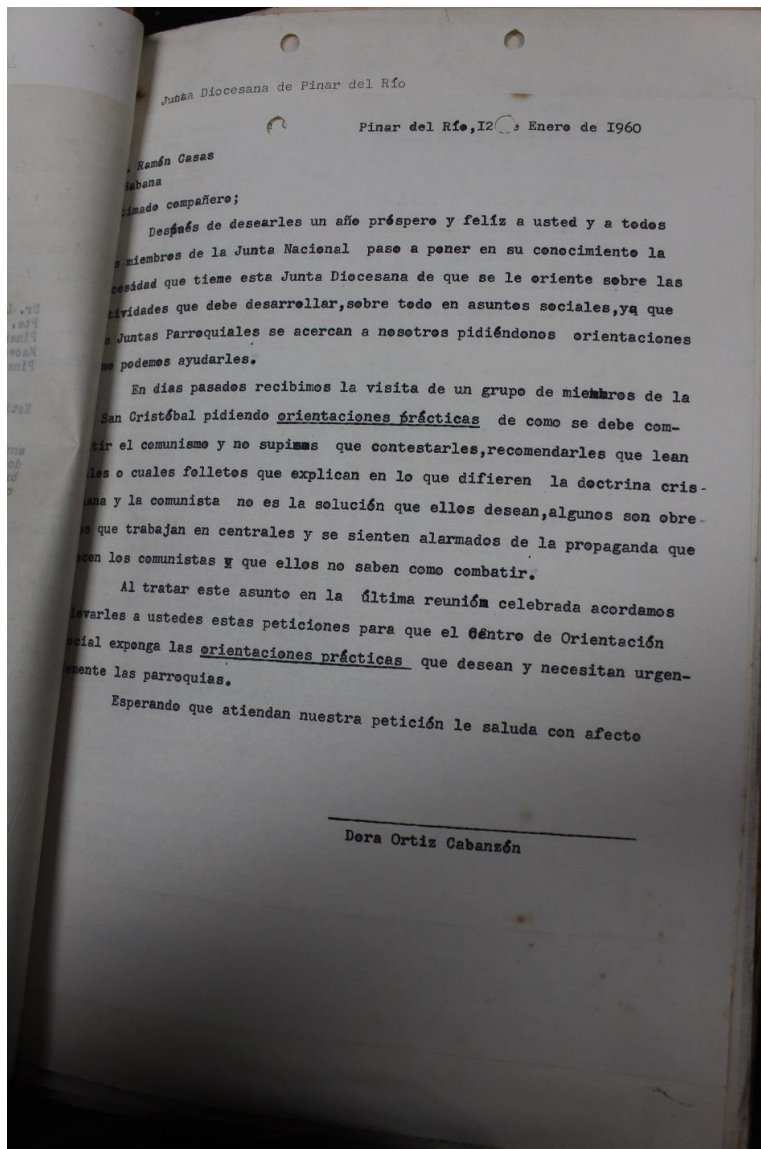
On the right, collections of syllabi and course materials.

Archive of the Seminary *San Carlos y San Ambrosio*

*Archivo del Seminario San Carlos y San Ambrosio*



### Appendix 3: Selected Primary Sources

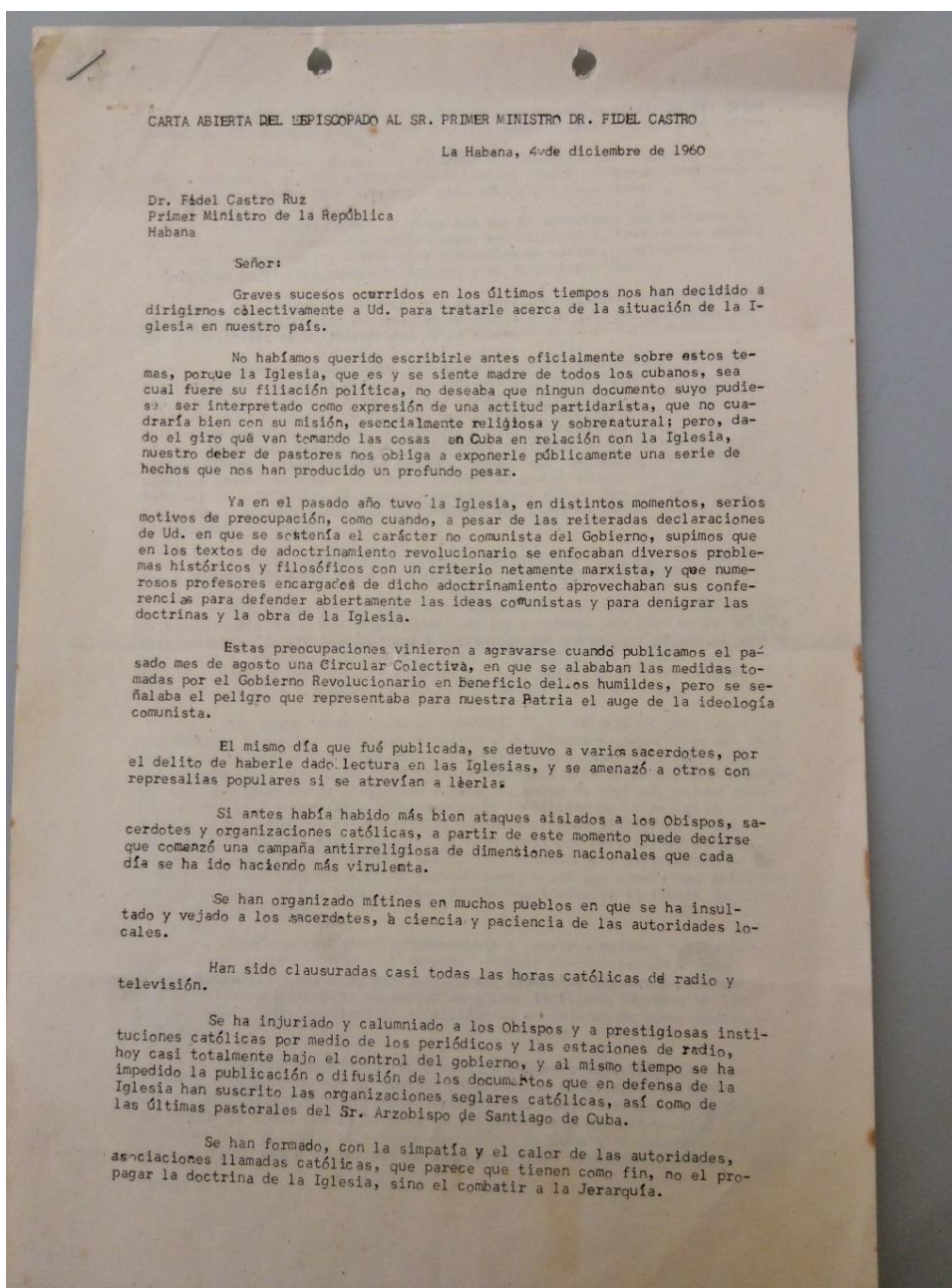


Picture 1

A letter from Dora Ortiz Cabanzón to Ramón Casas on January 21, 1960. In the letter, Ortiz Cabanzón delivers a message from Pinar del Río's local lay Catholics who ask for practical guidance to combatting communism in the daily life of the community.

Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Havana  
*Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de La Habana*

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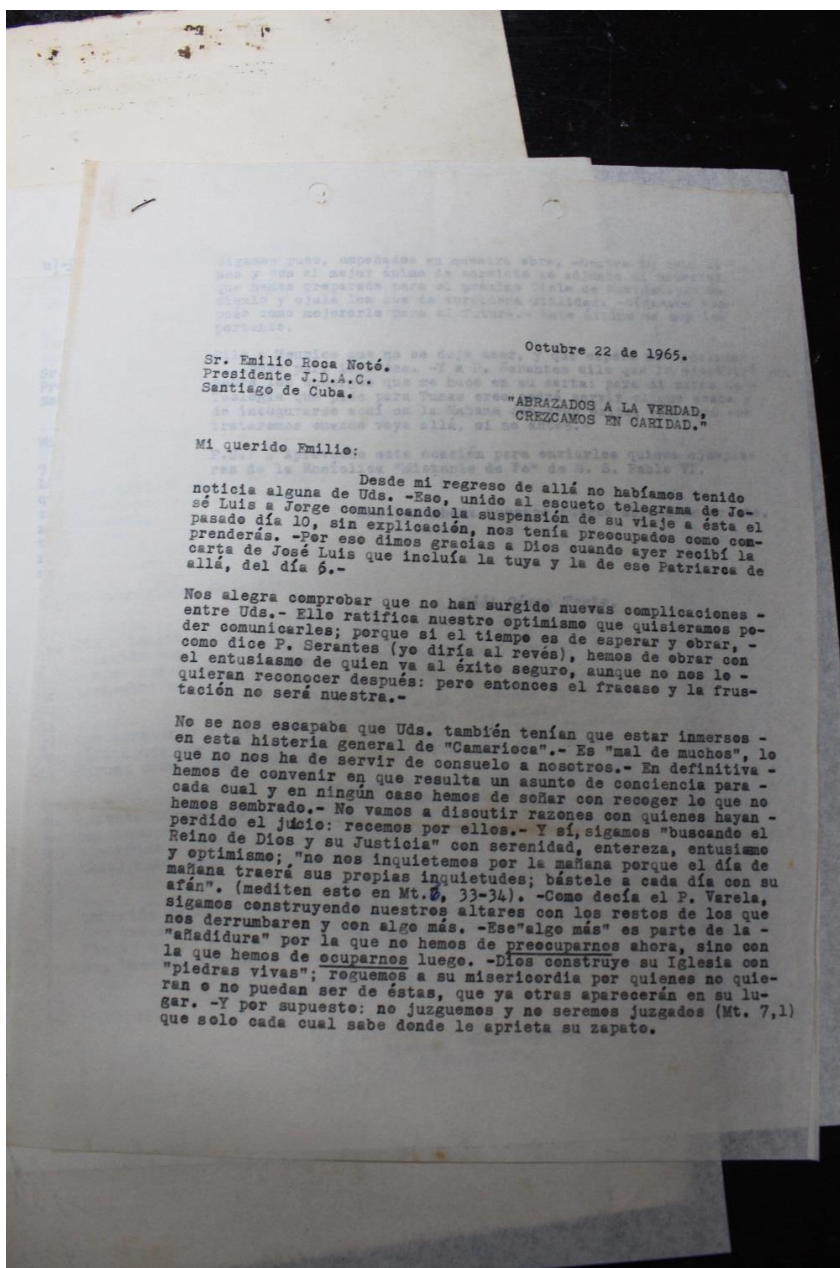


**Picture 2**

The original copy of the first page of the letter from the Cuban bishops to Fidel Castro on December 4, 1960.

Archive of the Cuban Catholic Bishops' Conference  
*Archivo de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba*

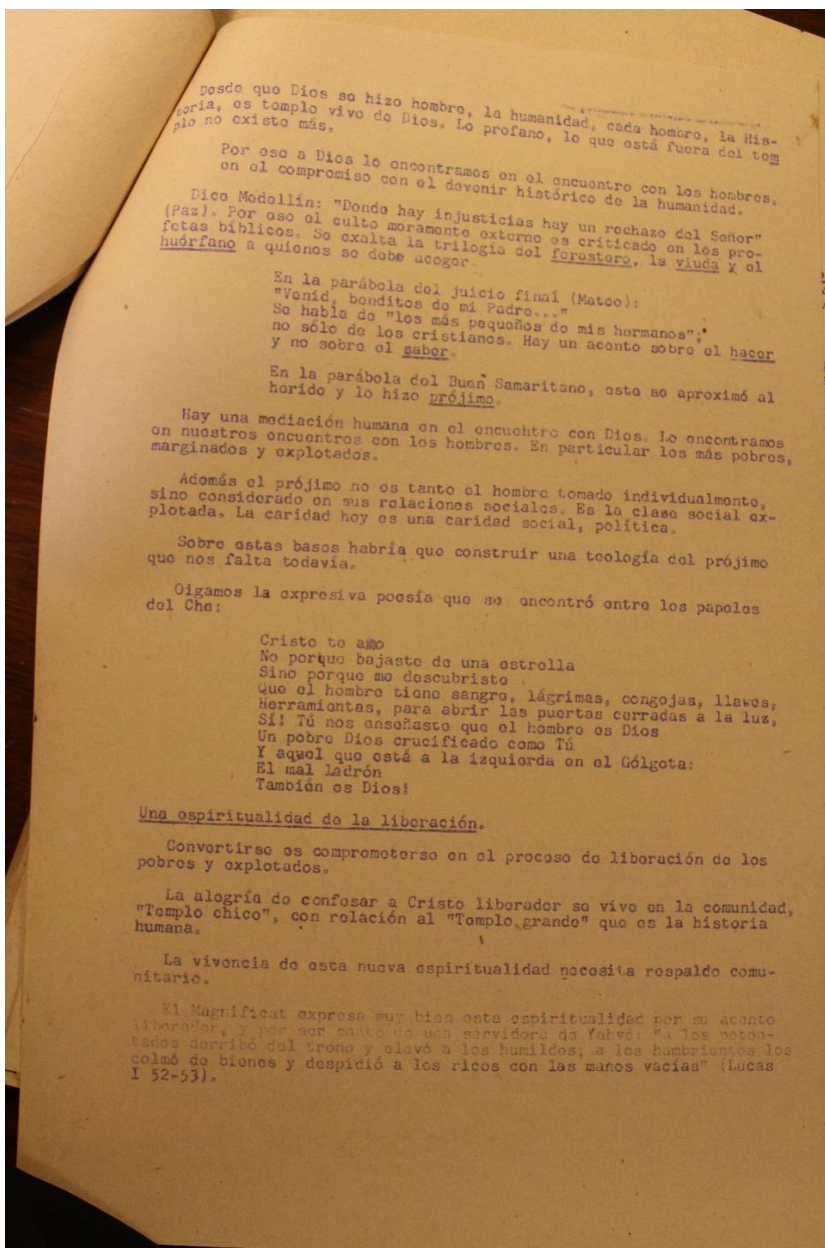




Picture 3

A letter from Raúl Gómez Treto to Emilio Roca Notó on October 22, 1965, discussing the experience of Camarioca.

Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Havana  
*Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de La Habana*

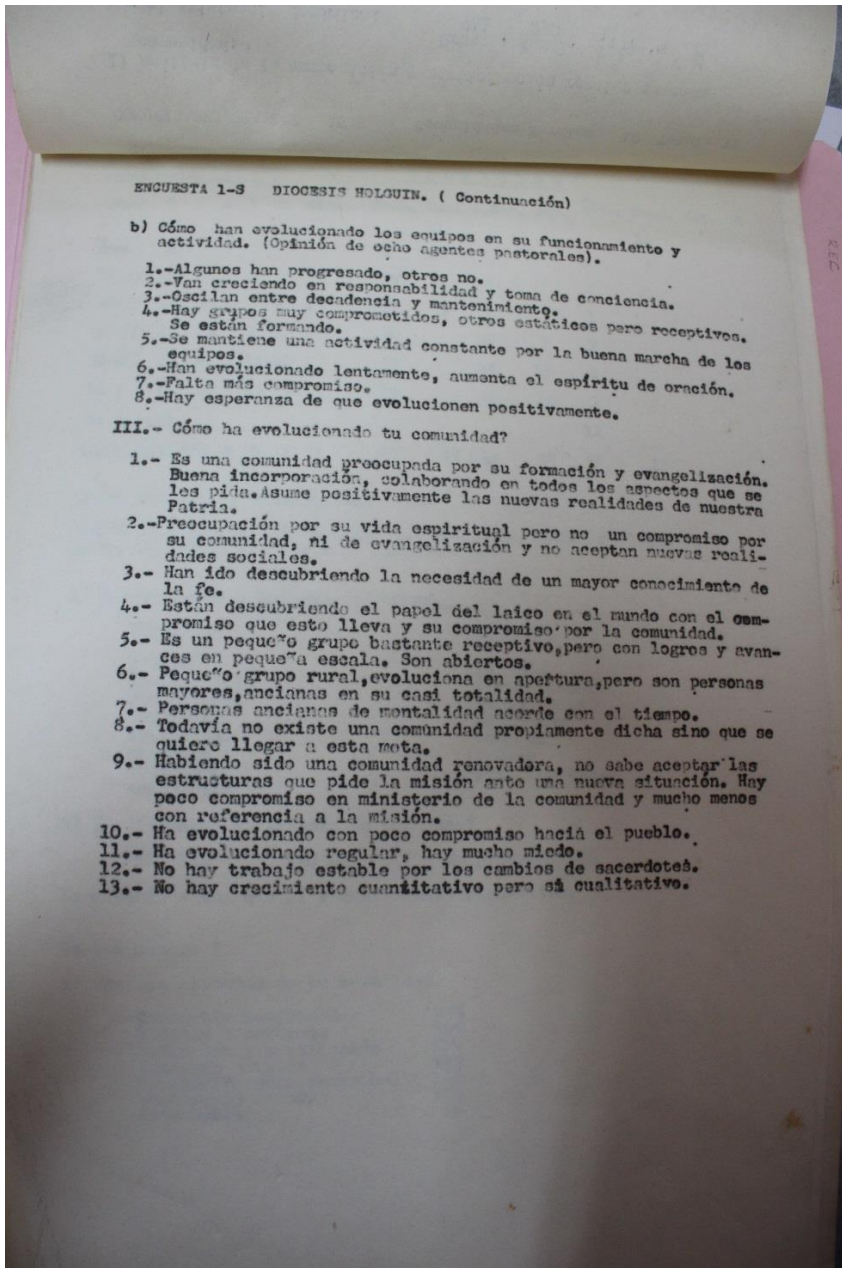


Picture 4

A study material of a course regarding liberation theology, used by the seminarians at *San Carlos y San Ambrosio*. The poem presented to the seminarians was allegedly discovered among the papers that belonged to Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

Archive of the Seminary *San Carlos y San Ambrosio*  
*Archivo del Seminario San Carlos y San Ambrosio*

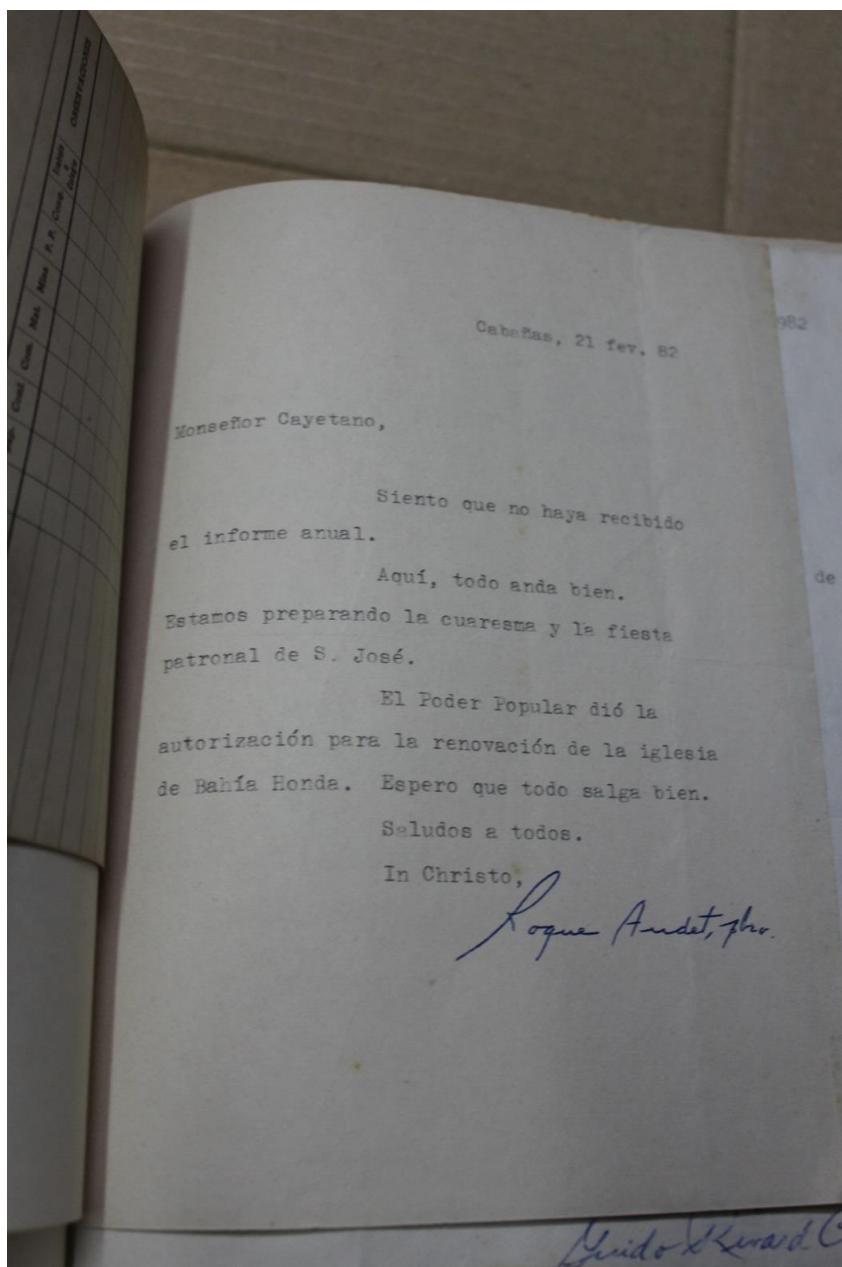




Picture 5

A summary of experiences in ecclesial life and pastoral work in the Diocese of Holguín during the REC process.

Archive of the Diocese of Holguín  
*Archivo del Obispado de Holguín*

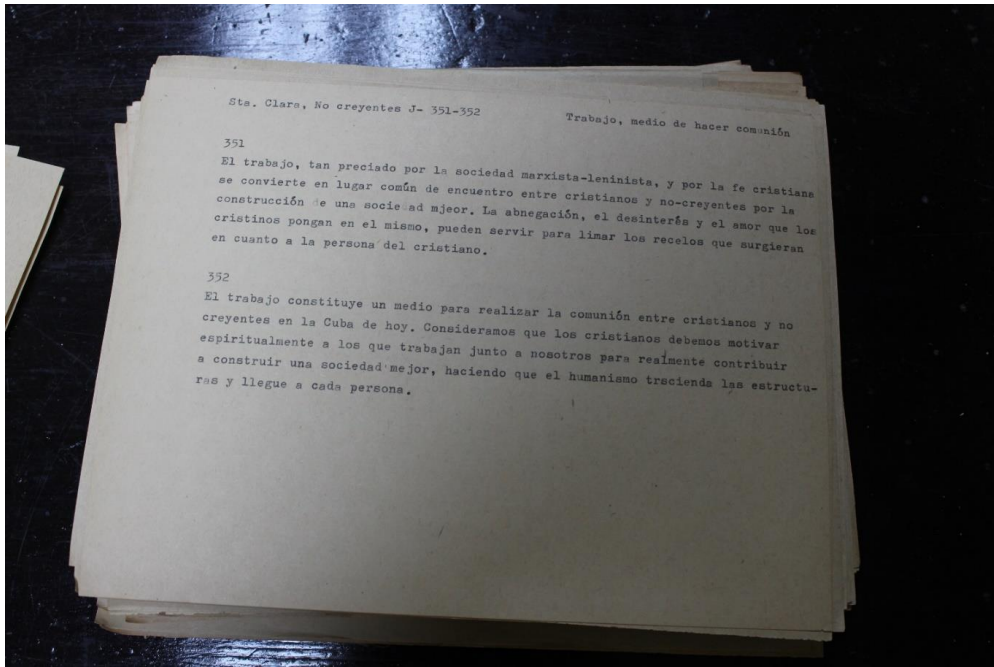


Picture 6

A letter from a priest in Cabañas in the Diocese of Pinar del Río, describing the state of ecclesial life in February 1982.

Archive of the Chancery of the Diocese of Pinar del Río  
*Archivo de la Cancillería del Obispado de Pinar del Río*

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### Picture 7

An example of the discussion by the Diocesan Assemblies, organized in the summer of 1985. In Santa Clara, work was identified as a shared value and a commitment in both Catholic and Marxist-Leninist thought. Under the first document are other individual documents produced in Santa Clara that are included the collection AHAAH REC OP.

Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Havana  
*Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de La Habana*

